

INTER-AMERICAN TROPICAL TUNA COMMISSION
COMMITTEE ON ADMINISTRATION AND FINANCE (CAF)
INTERSESSIONAL MEETING OF THE COMMITTEE ON
ADMINISTRATION AND FINANCE (*EXTRAORDINARY*)

By videoconference

23 June 2025

REPORT OF THE CHAIR

AGENDA

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APPENDICES

1. List of attendees

The intersessional meeting of the Committee on Administration and Finance (*Extraordinary*) was held by videoconference on 23 June 2025. Delegations from Canada, Colombia, Chinese Taipei, China, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Japan, Mexico, Nicaragua, Peru, the European Union, the United States, and Venezuela participated.

1. Opening of the meeting

The Chair of the Committee, Ms. Rachael Wadsworth of the United States, opened the meeting after the IATTC Director confirmed there was a quorum. She specified that this meeting was intended to preview the budget materials before the formal meeting of the Committee. Given the format of the meeting and the time available, the discussion would focus on presentations, clarifications, comments, and requests for additional information related to the Commission's budget, without yet entering into complex negotiations on the budget itself.

However, as some participants pointed out, the meeting should be formal, and recommendations could be recorded for the IATTC depending on the progress of the discussions. It was also noted that there would most likely not be enough time at this meeting to review the financial formula, but that it was imperative to

begin that work as soon as possible. The proposal from Canada on the formula presented at the Panama meeting in 2024 was recalled.

On this occasion, it was decided that the Secretariat would take on the role of rapporteur.

2. Adoption of the agenda

The Director requested that the agenda be revised to review the IATTC budget issues prior to the review of the agenda item on amendments to the AIDCP budget. This would allow for progress and a better understanding of the results of the Meeting of the Parties to the AIDCP and its proposals to the IATTC. With these changes the agenda was adopted.

3. Preliminary forecasted 2026 IATTC budget

Under agenda item 3, IATTC Director, Dr. Arnulfo Franco, gave a presentation on the evolution of the IATTC budget from **2021** to date. He noted that the budget and agreed contributions for that year were \$8.1 million.

In **2022**, the budget was approximately US\$ 8.5 million. That year, the Commission approved the Enhanced Monitoring Program (EMP) for bigeye tuna, which began operating the following year under the 2023 budget. .

In **2023**, the countries contributed US\$ 8.5 million to the budget, while the budgeted expenditure, including the EMP, was US \$8.9 million, and the difference was taken from the surplus at that time.

By **2024**, discussions had begun on the formula for calculating contributions, as some countries had changed their development category, as estimated by the World Bank, which meant that they would have to make larger contributions, and they expressed disagreement about paying these increases. In addition to the payment for the EMP, the Commission decided to freeze contributions at the 2021 level and temporarily added a professional to the staff to coordinate and support activities related to the work program on Management Strategy Evaluation. This resulted in an effective budget of approximately US\$ 9.4 million, of which Member countries contributed only US\$ 8.1 million. Once again, the difference was taken from the remaining surplus.

The actual budget for **2025** was US \$9,539,427 million, while Member countries committed to contributing US\$ 8,484,677 million. It was again agreed that the difference would be taken from the surplus, including the resources necessary for implementing a tuna sampling program in the EPO and continuing the Enhanced Monitoring Program. Additionally, the Secretariat faced unforeseen expenses of around US\$ 300,000 to address the emergency caused by a very serious cyberattack. Other essential expenditures included severance payments to field office staff who left the organization and fees paid to lawyers for various labor lawsuits filed by former observers, as well as for the legal defense of an observer arrested and imprisoned alongside the crew of a vessel carrying illegal substances.

As a result of these successive expenses not covered by Member contributions, there is currently no surplus.

After reviewing the recent budgets and their implementation, the Director presented the preliminary forecasted 2026 budget, which includes the amounts required to cover the activities detailed in its main items. The Commission approved these activities, including specific requests from Members for meetings, as well as taking into account the considerable cost increase, which sometimes exceeded the inflation rate. The preliminary budget for 2026 is US\$ 10.24 million, while the actual budget for 2025 was US\$ 9.54 million, partially covered by the remaining surplus funds.

After the Director's presentation, several comments were made, including the following:

(a) Method and achievements to be made at the meeting.

Guatemala stated that it would be desirable for this meeting to produce a roadmap that could lead to a consensus-based recommendation for the IATTC, reflecting the AIDCP recommendation.

(b) Various clarifications:

Several delegations inquired about the 11% increase in the budget from 2025 to 2026, which is much higher than the close to 3% increase resulting from inflation. They requested explanations to understand the source of these increases.

In response, the Director explained why the projected budget increase is higher than the inflation rate in percentage terms, referring to the following:

- Increase in the cost of living (inflation) of around 2.8%.
- Increase in salaries due to severance payments for staff scheduled to retire in 2026.
- Maintenance work in Achotines that had been postponed due to a lack of financial resources despite the clear deterioration of the affected facilities and equipment, in addition to increased operating costs (e.g., the price of food for the tuna under study and in captivity).
- The consequences of the 2024 cyberattack: The cost of recovering networks and servers, as well as the cost of measures necessary to prevent this serious incident from happening again. This includes the payment of rent for a cloud data storage service, as well as other expenses such as the acquisition of protection programs and updates to the Commission's operating systems.
- In addition to the costs of annual meetings, holding intersessional and working group meetings in response to Member requests and expectations represents a considerable expense, averaging US\$ 200,000 per meeting.

(c) Contingency fund

In response to a question from Guatemala, the Director reported that there was NO contingency fund to cover unforeseen expenses such as those he had mentioned earlier, including the cyberattack and the fees of lawyers hired for cases involving observers. Despite the importance of such a fund, it had never been considered by the Commission.

(d) General statements on the estimated amount of a budget based on Member contributions:

Colombia stated that it would be inappropriate to analyze expenses item by item at the meeting. A more efficient use of the limited time available would be to discuss the resources that the Members could contribute and establish a budget and maximum spending limit based on those contributions. Based on this approach, some participants made the following statements:

- El Salvador stated that it could not support increases to the IATTC budget and that spending scenarios should be reviewed without raising contributions.
- Guatemala requested that the budget be adjusted to US\$ 8.5 million, and that the Commission's essential work be safeguarded as a matter of principle.
- Nicaragua stated that it cannot accept an increase in contributions.
- Venezuela recalled its outstanding contributions and reiterated its willingness to make those payments once the issue preventing bank transfers to the Commission's account is resolved. It noted that these payments could help ease the Commission's financial situation. Venezuela requested that the Committee be presented with at least three budget scenarios at its next meeting.
- The United States agreed that different budget scenarios should be presented based on the 2023 approved budget, but requested that the Secretariat also present its 2026 proposal with clear

explanations and justifications for the expenditures in each category so that the Committee could consider it. The United States asked that the Secretariat make it clear what activities would not occur under alternative budget scenarios. The United States added that the continuation of the Enhanced Monitoring Program for bigeye tuna should be considered in the context of potential changes to the tropical tuna measure (C-24-01), and that there may be other alternatives for carrying out this specific work.

- Panama expressed its support for a budget of US\$ 8.3 million and offered to act as an intermediary to ensure that Venezuela's outstanding contributions are paid into the Commission's U.S. bank account.
- Peru indicated that it would be unable to contribute any additional resources beyond what was approved in the 2023 budget.
- Ecuador stated that it could not make contributions beyond those made in 2023. It also pointed out that, as discussed at the meeting of the Scientific Advisory Committee, research should be prioritized and external financing should be sought.
- Mexico indicated that it cannot support an increase in its contribution and emphasized that expenditures should be prioritized without compromising the operations of the IATTC.
- Guatemala mentioned the programs it considers essential for the Commission and its operations in general terms:
 - Stock assessments
 - Study of the most important bycatch issues
 - Data collection, including observer programs
 - Compliance

Guatemala stated that the Enhanced Monitoring Program for bigeye tuna is not a priority because catch thresholds can be applied independently of the program, among other reasons.

Guatemala pointed out that all programs should be presented and that if Members are interested in financing them, it would greatly benefit their implementation. It also requested that, in the future, programs, scientific projects or studies proposed to the Commission be accompanied by financial requirements so that the Commission can decide on the feasibility of carrying them out.

4. AIDCP budget change proposal

During his initial presentation, the Director explained that, at the last AIDCP meeting, staff and on-board observer time devoted to the benefit of the IATTC and the AIDCP was reviewed in detail. It was concluded that each instrument should cover 50% of the AIDCP budget. He emphasized that most forms filled out by on-board observers benefit the IATTC's work in stock assessments and regulatory issues in the fishery.

He mentioned that the IATTC contributed approximately US\$ 820,000 to the AIDCP observer programme in 2024. As a result of analyses carried out by the AIDCP, the documents concluded that the IATTC should increase its contribution by about US\$ 500,000 by 2026.

Guatemala explained that the IATTC's 30% contribution to the observer program was no longer adequate since, under the Antigua Convention, the IATTC is responsible for the observer program. After legal and working time analyses, it was determined that the IATTC and the AIDCP should each contribute 50% to cover the program's costs.

The United States noted that a decision on a new 50-50% split between the IATTC and the AIDCP contribution is not something that automatically follows from its consideration and analysis in the AIDCP,

and that the Committee on Administration and Finance (CAF) must review it to make a recommendation to the Commission.

Japan agreed with this approach and recalled that it is not a Party to the AIDCP. If a decision is made within the framework of the agreement, Japan believes that the studies and documents leading to that conclusion should be evaluated and reviewed by the CAF. The European Union agreed that there were not yet sufficient elements to issue a recommendation similar to that adopted by the Parties to the AIDCP.

5. Formula proposals

The Chair noted that this issue would not be reviewed at the current meeting. As mentioned at the beginning of the meeting, it will be addressed as soon as possible.

6. Auditors for 2026

Ms. Nora Roa of the Commission's staff reported on the progress made in identifying, selecting, and hiring a new company to conduct the 2026 audits, in accordance with the Commission's decision at its last meeting. She noted that the current firm, Moss Adams (MA), had merged with Baker Tilly. The 2026 audit could be carried out by this company, which would conduct the initial stage with the same staff. However, the review stage would be carried out by the Baker Tilly team that had merged with MA.

The United States supported working with Baker Tilly for 2026. However, Guatemala stated that, according to its record of the previous meeting, it had been agreed to seek a new firm in order to comply with the rule that the same firm should not conduct audits for an extended period of time. Guatemala added that this principle should be used to decide on the firm for 2026.

The IATTC Director noted that few firms were willing to carry out this work since the volume of work and remuneration are low. However, options will be sought and presented at following CAF meetings.

7. Proposed financial regulations of the Commission

Guatemala thanked the Secretariat for the document presented to begin updating the Commission's current, obsolete regulations. It requested sufficient time to discuss the document and await the results of the work being carried out by consultants within the framework of the IATTC to improve financial practices in the AIDCP. Guatemala also requested that the consultants consider the document to enrich their work.

The United States requested that if the current document is submitted to these consultants for consideration, Track Changes should be used so that the proposed adjustments can be easily identified, provided that it does not incur additional costs.

The Committee agreed to allow sufficient time to update the financial regulations. The Secretariat's current proposal will serve as the basis for the work and, in coordination with the Chair, the necessary consultations with delegations will be carried out so that a more robust document can be prepared next year.

8. Other business

No other business was discussed.

9. Conclusions and recommendations

The participants that attended the meeting suggested the following items to facilitate further work and make considerable progress by the time of the Panama meeting in August 2025. The specific wording of these suggestions was not reviewed at the meeting.

- Hold two more intersessional meetings via videoconference prior to the Committee's in-person meeting in Panama.
- For these upcoming meetings, the Secretariat prepare several budget scenarios, including a budget of US\$ 8.3 million, as well as the one originally proposed for 2026 at the annual meeting in Panama and

everything that would not be accomplished if the increase is not adopted.

- That, in the future, programs, scientific projects or studies proposed to the Commission generally be accompanied by an indication of the necessary financial requirements to carry them out. This will allow the Commission to evaluate their feasibility and decide whether to carry them out.
- That, at future inter-sessional meetings, the documentation be reviewed that was presented at the AIDCP and which led its Parties to decide to propose to the IATTC a new distribution of their respective contributions of 50% and 50% instead of 30% and 70%.
- That the Secretariat present alternatives of firms that specialize in audits to ensure that the same firm does not provide this service for an extended period of time. This will improve transparency and the quality of the service provided.
- That the financial regulations document prepared by the Secretariat be used as a basis for consultations to update the current regulations and share it with the consultants working within the AIDCP framework, provided it does not incur additional costs.

10. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 5:30 p.m. San Diego, California time on 23 June 2025.

ANNEX

1. List of participants

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