INTERNATIONAL DOLPHIN CONSERVATION PROGRAM

ON-BOARD OBSERVER PROGRAM

2ND MEETING OF IATTC AND NATIONAL OBSERVER PROGRAMS

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GUIDELINES FOR TECHNICAL TRAINING OF OBSERVERS

These guidelines are not intended as a blueprint for training sessions, but to highlight some essential aspects of observer training. The most important element for the success of training sessions is the selection of competent instructors, who should have several years' experience of working with the program as observers and/or data editors.

Training sessions of the AIDCP On-Board Observer Program should include training on: a) fishing methods and procedures and vessel operations; b) identification of marine species; and c) procedures for completing data forms; plus instructions regarding documentation of non-compliance with IATTC and AIDCP resolutions.

1. Fishing methods and procedures

This part of training should aim to familiarize the trainees with all aspects of purse-seine fishing operations, with special emphasis on the terminology used by fisherman and the standard codes and terminology to be used on the data forms. The trainees should be given the information necessary to identify the critical phases of these procedures; this will enable program personnel and national authorities to verify compliance with regulations.

Training sessions should include audiovisual material illustrating:

    a. purse-seine tuna fishing gear;

    b. purse-seine fishing procedures;

    c. dolphin rescue procedures.

2. Identification of marine species

The instructors should familiarize the trainees with the diagnostic external characteristics necessary for identifying the following taxonomic groups (in order of importance):

    a. tunas;

    b. dolphins associated with tuna fishing;

    c. sea turtles;

    d. billfishes, sharks and rays associated with tuna fishing;

    e. other cetaceans in the fishing area;

    f. other marine fauna associated with tuna fishing;

    g. seabirds.

3. Procedures for completing data forms

This should be the most extensive part of training, and should be based on the procedures in the observer

field manual. It should include all forms covered in the manual. The trainees should complete as many simulations as possible of situations that may happen during a trip, thus allowing a more objective evaluation of their learning and performance during the training.

4. IATTC and AIDCP resolutions and regulations

This part of the training session should emphasize that the observer's role is to document the vessel's activities, and not to enforce, interpret or offer advice on any resolutions or regulations. The observer must be aware of these regulations, and inform vessel personnel about them if requested, but must not take them into account when recording data.

In particular, this part of the training should focus on making trainees aware of the possibility of interference (including bribery attempts), intimidation or obstruction by vessel crew during a trip, and preparing them to identify, deal with, and document any such instances, using actual cases as examples. They should be instructed in the importance of addressing such situations in a decisive and professional manner. The trainees should be able to identify such instances, and describe them clearly and in detail without including personal opinions, assumptions or irrelevant comments.