

**AGREEMENT ON THE INTERNATIONAL DOLPHIN CONSERVATION
PROGRAM**

**AD HOC WORKING GROUP ON THE FINANCIAL
STRENGTHENING OF THE AIDCP**

By videoconference
22-23 July 2024

CHAIR'S REPORT

The *ad hoc* meeting was held by videoconference on 22-23 July, and resumed on 26 July, with the participation of Bolivia, Colombia, Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, the United States and Venezuela. In addition, Mr. Andrés Arens, Chair of the IATTC, and Rubén Balboa of FUNDATUN also participated. The meeting began with the following agenda:

1. - Opening of the meeting: The Chair of the Ad Hoc Group, Mr. Alvin Delgado of Venezuela, opened the meeting after confirming that a quorum was present. He recalled that this group had been established because of concerns about the accounting, financial and budgetary management system applied by the IATTC Secretariat to the AIDCP in its capacity as Secretariat, including the recording of expenses and the impact on the AIDCP budget in view of the restructuring of the Commission in 2021, the time devoted by IATTC staff to the work of the AIDCP and the salary increase for Commission staff in early 2022, which was not disclosed to the Parties at the IATTC and AIDCP meetings in Arizona, USA, nor at the AIDCP meeting in La Jolla in October, both in 2022, as it was first reported in the documents for the IATTC and AIDCP meetings in Victoria, Canada, in 2023.

These changes resulted in a deficit in the AIDCP budget in 2022, as well as in 2023 and 2024. On the other hand, it was considered that the restructuring did not take into account the work carried out by AIDCP observers under Commission mandates, which is increasing every year and should be taken into account, which could significantly change this assessment.

2.- Agenda: The Agenda was approved with only one item: “*Identify the elements to be addressed by the consultant to conduct the performance review of the AIDCP and to provide us with technical recommendations for its effective management, and to request the Secretariat to provide us with a list of possible consultants to authorize their hiring.*”

3.- Several Parties asked the Secretariat staff responsible for administrative and financial matters to provide the manuals and other related documents used to prepare and execute the AIDCP budget. Ms. Nora Roa explained that there are really no manuals, but rather an accounting practice that she has followed since she was hired. By email at the end of the first day, she sent fourteen files, some in English and Spanish, which were identified as recent documents prepared at the request of the current Director in the absence of similar documents. Some Parties expressed the need for more information, as these documents were insufficient as a whole to address accounting tools, policies, manuals and practices, and were identified as drafts and/or under development. Following a discussion, the Group worked on the preparation of terms of reference for the hiring of the consultant, on the basis of a proposal made by the Delegation of Colombia. At the beginning of the second day, the Delegation of Guatemala, building on the proposal of Colombia, presented a more detailed draft of the terms of reference, on the basis of which the Working Group continued the discussion until its approval, as shown in Annex 1, in a third session, resumed in the same format on 26 July. After the first day,

Guatemala sent a series of questions to the Secretariat by e-mail, which were replied to by Ms. Nora Roa by e-mail, who was asked to elaborate on the responses in a document to be sent to the Meeting of the Parties.

After discussion, the following was approved:

1. The terms of reference for the hiring of the consultant.
2. Proceed with the hiring of the consultant, for which the Secretariat shall submit a list of at least 5 consultants who meet the requirements of the terms of reference, after selection by the Parties.
3. Recommend to the Parties to the AIDCP the formation of an *ad hoc* group of experts to re-evaluate the work carried out by IATTC staff to the AIDCP and the work of AIDCP observers to the IATTC (Annex).

4.- Adjournment: The meeting was adjourned by thanking the Parties for their participation.

ANNEX

PROPOSED RESOLUTION A-24-01

CREATION OF AN AD HOC GROUP FOR THE ASSESSMENT OF THE WORK OF THE IATTC/AIDCP

The Parties to the Agreement on the International Dolphin Conservation Program (AIDCP):

Taking into account the importance of the work of the IATTC staff to the functioning of the AIDCP;

Reaffirming the conviction to ensure the functioning and operational strengthening of the AIDCP;

Concerned about the increase in budget execution that has caused a deficit in recent years;

Considering that the restructuring carried out by the Commission during 2021 and the increase in Commission staff salaries during 2022 significantly impacted the AIDCP budget;

Considering that the work carried out by AIDCP observers for the IATTC was not taken into account in the restructuring;

Recalling that the IATTC provides the Secretariat to the AIDCP in accordance with Article XIV of the Agreement and Article VII(1)(t) of the Antigua Convention;

Agree;

1. To create an *Ad Hoc* Working Group of experts to assist the Commission staff in reassessing the work performed by the IATTC staff for the AIDCP; this assessment should also include the work performed by observers for the IATTC.
2. The Working Group shall have the following functions:
 - a) Review the methodology used by the Commission staff to evaluate the time dedicated by its staff to the operation of the AIDCP.
 - b) Have the staff of the national programs, together with the staff managing the IATTC program, evaluate the time dedicated by AIDCP observers to the work of the Commission.
 - c) Conduct a new assessment of the work performed by the IATTC staff for the AIDCP and evaluate the work performed by AIDCP observers for the work of the Commission.
 - d) Recommend the results of this assessment to the Meeting of the Parties to the AIDCP for consideration of its impact on the AIDCP budget.
3. To recommend to the Commission that it also consider carrying out this work within the framework of the Commission and, if possible, jointly.