

AGREEMENT ON THE INTERNATIONAL DOLPHIN CONSERVATION PROGRAM

50th MEETING OF THE PARTIES

La Jolla, California (USA)

25-26 March 2025

(Hybrid format)

REPORT OF THE MEETING

AGENDA

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2. Resolution A-25-01 on the AIDCP budget

The 50th Meeting of the Parties to the Agreement on the International Dolphin Conservation Program (AIDCP) was held in La Jolla, California, on 25-26 March 2025 in a hybrid format (in person and remotely).

1. Opening of the meeting

The meeting was opened by its Chair, Ms. Yarkelia Vergara, of Panama. The Chair expressed her gratitude for the trust placed in her by the Parties and referred to the former Chair, Mr. Alvin Delgado, of Venezuela, to highlight his commitment and the work he carried out during the several years of his presidency. The United States, Guatemala, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama and Venezuela participated in the meeting in person. Bolivia, Colombia and Ecuador participated remotely. There was therefore a quorum for the meeting.

2. Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was approved as submitted, with the addition of two items regarding the presentation of documents A-50-01 and A-50-02 under agenda item 3.

3. AIDCP adjusted budget

3a. On-board observers tasks analysis ([AIDCP-50-01](#))

Mr. Enrique Ureña, Coordinator of the IATTC Observer Program, presented document AIDCP-50-01, which contained an analysis of the forms completed by observers as evidence of the proportion of their tasks performed for the benefit of the AIDCP and the IATTC, respectively. In conclusion, it is clear that the 30% contribution of the cost of the observer program as the IATTC's contribution to the AIDCP, established years before the entry into force of the Antigua Convention, is not sufficient to cover the cost of the tasks carried out for the benefit of the IATTC. The document concludes that a 50%-50% allocation would be more appropriate and reasonable, or, in any event, the IATTC contribution should not be less than 40% of the AIDCP budget.

In general terms, the comments received on this document were as follows:

- **Guatemala.** It is very reasonable that the benefits of the observer program should be split 50% between the two programs (IATTC and AIDCP). This statement was also made by Panama, Nicaragua and Venezuela.
- **Venezuela.** The data provided by the Secretariat on the percentage of forms completed by observers for the benefit of the IATTC and the AIDCP are consistent with the data obtained from its national observer program, following a similar evaluation recently conducted.
- **Colombia** noted that the columns in Table 1 relating to the weighting of observer time by fishery, whether associated with dolphins or with FADs and schools, could be somewhat confusing and therefore required an explanation of their usefulness. The Secretariat explained that it was a matter of analyzing all aspects of the tuna fishery and taking into account all the forms used in the different fishing techniques, since in the dolphin-associated fishery a significant amount of time is spent filling out forms related to dolphin bycatch, and in the floating-object fishery with the identification and number of FADs used. The Secretariat clarified that the calculations and analyses carried out relate to the entire fleet subject to the observer program, either under AIDCP or IATTC resolutions.
- **Ecuador** asked whether this analysis had taken into account the differences between the work carried out by vessels that request DMLs and those that do not. The Secretariat indicated that the inclusion was visualized in the information provided in the columns dedicated to identifying the time spent by observers in fisheries associated with dolphins and those not associated with dolphins.
- **The United States** noted the complexity of making such estimates of observer time for the benefit of the IATTC or the AIDCP, in addition to the fact that the assessment cannot be static and must surely change as one or another type of dolphin-associated or non-dolphin-associated fishery predominates.

3b. Percentage analysis of the time dedicated by the staff to AIDCP tasks ([AIDCP-50-02](#))

The Director of the IATTC, Dr. Arnulfo Franco, presented document AIDCP-50-02. He explained that it provided information on the percentage of time dedicated by each IATTC staff member to tasks, either under the Antigua Convention or under the AIDCP. For this analysis, a questionnaire was prepared and used to verify and refine a similar evaluation carried out in previous years, but with the introduction of more precise variables in terms of the work devoted to compliance with the resolutions of each of the organizations. This questionnaire is reproduced in the document in question. Thus, it is possible to assess in greater detail and precision the financial impact of the tasks associated with each of these instruments in terms of the performance of the Secretariat's functions, the results of which have facilitated and guided the preparation of the revised AIDCP budget.

In general terms, the comments received on this document were as follows:

- **Guatemala** noted that this document was a significant improvement over the one previously

presented by the IATTC's Finance Department, and appreciated the information provided, noting that the document provided a good idea of the percentage of time spent by the Commission's staff on both the AIDCP and the IATTC, and was therefore a good guide for determining the financial burden to be allocated to each instrument.

- **Mexico** asked whether this document replaced the one presented as Annex A in document [AIDCP-48-01](#), where a similar revision to the one presented at this meeting had been made. The Secretariat responded affirmatively, noting that the revision made in document AIDCP-50-02 was to adjust the AIDCP budget for 2025, as requested by the Meeting of the Parties in Resolution A-24-01.
- **The United States** noted that this document and AIDCP 50-01 were appropriate starting points for making a request to relocate (USA) financial responsibilities between the IATTC and the AIDCP with respect to the on-board observer program.
- Several delegations stressed the need for working documents to be made available in sufficient time for due consideration by the Parties, given that they had been posted on the website only three days in advance, including one on the day of the meeting.

The Parties agreed that documents AIDCP-50-01 and AIDCP-50-02 should be reviewed and adjusted as necessary to inform and guide future analyses when budgets are submitted for review and approval.

3.c Presentation of the budget by the Secretariat

As requested by the Parties at their 49th meeting, the Director of the IATTC, Dr. Arnulfo Franco, presented document [AIDCP-50-03](#) on a proposed adjustment to the AIDCP budget based on the results of the above analyses of the percentage of time spent by Commission staff and on-board observers on AIDCP and IATTC tasks, respectively.

He also recalled that in Resolution [A-24-01](#), a budget of US\$ 3,766,609.00 was preliminarily approved for the 2025 AIDCP budget, but only US\$ 3,168,977 was authorized for expenditure, with the understanding that an adjusted budget would be presented at this 50th extraordinary meeting.

He commented that the adjusted budget reflects the revenue from Class-6 vessel assessments through February 2025 and other revenue from vessels smaller than Class-6, late fees, and inactive and sunk vessel assessments. The document assumes an equal percentage allocation between the IATTC and the AIDCP for the cost of the on-board observer program, but for comparison purposes, it also considered what the result would be under the previous allocation of 30% and 70%, respectively. The document shows that under the assumption of equal allocation of observer program costs between the AIDCP and the IATTC, the 2025 revenue forecast can fully cover the 2025 AIDCP budget, but an adjustment to the IATTC contribution of a 20% increase would be required to make up the 50%. The adjustment does not change the direct cost of the expenses and services provided by the Secretariat to the AIDCP, which remain essentially the same, with a reduction of around US\$ 6,000.00.

3.d Discussion of the budget

Based on the presentation made by the Director on the AIDCP budget for 2025, Guatemala noted that it was very important to have a clear understanding of the total amount of the program's budget for 2025, since Resolution A-24-01 had approved a preliminary budget of US\$ 3,766,609, and to have an adjusted budget based on the analyses presented by the Secretariat at the beginning of the meeting. He emphasized that the integration of documents AIDCP-50-01 and AIDCP-50-02 had the virtue of ensuring compliance with the provisions of Article XIV, paragraph 3, of the Antigua Convention, in the sense that the AIDCP must cover the costs of the services and expenses corresponding to the tasks carried out under the IDCP Agreement, which had not occurred since the entry into force of the Antigua Convention; it was therefore necessary to correct the procedure without jeopardizing the stability of the observer program in 2025, so a practical solution had to be found that was consistent with the regulations in force.

The Director reported that the difference between the budget approved in Resolution A-24-01 (as the

authorized budget for expenditures, i.e., US\$ 3,168,977) and the actual total required for the program was approximately US\$ 500,000, which should be split between the IATTC and AIDCP budgets on a 50%-50% basis, as previously presented.

This led to a lengthy discussion in which some Parties considered that documents AIDCP-50-01 and AIDCP-50-02 were not presented for approval, but only for information and discussion purposes; it was also pointed out that the IATTC should be informed of, and adopt, this proposal to adjust the percentage allocation of contributions, which would be quite complicated as the IATTC budget for 2025 had already been approved.

Guatemala stated that during the presentation of documents AIDCP-50-01 and AIDCP-50-02, no objections or interventions were raised regarding the need to amend them, except for possible considerations for improvement. Therefore, it was important to consider them as a basis for proposing a new distribution of budgetary burdens to the IATTC, and it was urgent to adopt a decision by the Meeting of the Parties to the AIDCP, the result of which should be presented for consideration by the IATTC at the next meeting of the Administration and Finance Committee (CAF) in April 2025 and at the Plenary of the Commission.

Many delegations supported Guatemala's position to consider a 50%-50% allocation of contributions to the AIDCP budget, and that it would not be possible to approve an AIDCP budget if it implied maintaining an expected deficit.

The delegation of Mexico pointed out that, while it would be possible to achieve a 50%-50% distribution of the budget, it was essential to also undertake parallel efforts to improve the efficiency of program expenditures in order to reduce costs and promote more effective financial management. This position was supported by several Parties, which requested the Secretariat to continue to implement on a permanent basis the necessary measures to rationalize and possibly reduce resources, without compromising the fulfilment of the essential obligations of the Secretariat. The Director expressed his willingness and disposition to continue to apply an austere expenditure policy, while warning that further reductions or adjustments beyond those presented by the Secretariat would have operational implications for the Secretariat and its staff and could affect its the work.

Venezuela explained that until 2021, the IATTC budgeted for the payment of its staff's work time spent processing observer data, based on a review of staff time spent at the IATTC and the AIDCP. It was not until late 2021 that it was decided to charge this expense to the AIDCP. Although it was not regulated, the IATTC included it in its annual budget. However, when changes occurred at the end of 2021, which were not reported in 2022 but rather at the end of 2023, when the IATTC 2023 and 2024 budgets had already been approved, adjustments were made to transfer expenses from one instrument to another, leading to the AIDCP budget imbalance. Additionally, the IATTC administrative area reported that the increase in the AIDCP budget had a correspondingly large decrease in the IATTC budget. The increases in the AIDCP budget for 2022, 2023, and 2024 cannot be reversed or are very difficult to reverse, so they will remain as they are and could be considered as a contribution from the AIDCP to the IATTC.

This also supports the idea of regulating the AIDCP budget expenditure proportion of 50% to 50%, as the IATTC already did until 2021. All of this is a matter of equity and justice. (VEN)

In light of the above statements, the Parties made a joint effort to reach consensus on the basis of an agreed text, the content of which was reviewed and adjusted with the assistance of the Secretariat. The Secretariat provided assistance, including adjustments to the budget before decisions were taken. Several Parties requested the Secretariat to duly document the changes made (documentary evidence) and to submit an adjusted version of the budget as a "Rev-1" version.

During the discussion, the Parties recognized the difficulty the IATTC would have in ensuring the immediate provision of funds to cover any shortfall not covered by the AIDCP's extraordinary income and

available funds; therefore, it was recognized as an extraordinary contribution, on a one-time basis, and without creating a precedent or being interpreted as a change to the established rules.

Considering the possibility that the sum of the amount the AIDCP has allocated for the observer program (US\$ 1,299,388) together with the amount that IATTC has allocated for the same (US\$ 820,000) does not cover the full cost in 2025, authorize the following:

- i. The use of any extraordinary income from interests derived from the investment of AIDCP funds, new vessels and/or past-due assessment.
- ii. The utilization of the portion of surplus that had been approved and not committed for consumption in fiscal year 2024.
- iii. In the event that after the utilization of these funds a deficit remains, the corresponding portion shall be covered with additional funds from the surplus, in the event that the IATTC does not provide those funds and on the understanding that it is considered as an advance payment for the services and costs corresponding to the tasks that the IATTC develops as Secretariat within the framework of the AIDCP in the year 2026.

This shall be reported to IATTC for approval, as appropriate.

After review, discussion, and adjustments, the final text was adopted as Resolution A-25-01 (see Annex 2), and the final figures were included in document AIDCP-50-03-REV 1.

4. Other business

The Delegation of Venezuela suggested that all national observer programs encourage their office staff to make a trip on a tuna fishing vessel in order to learn first-hand the various activities carried out on board during fishing operations, in particular and most importantly, the duties performed by the on-board observer. This experience would allow the staff of the IATTC offices to have a better understanding of the working conditions of an on-board observer and thus contribute to a better performance of their duties. The Meeting of the Parties welcomed this proposal and noted the desirability of its implementation.

5. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned on 26 March at 3:40 p.m. in San Diego, California.

Annex 1. List of attendees

ASISTENTES - ATTENDEES	
MIEMBROS - MEMBERS	
BOLIVIA	
LIMBERT CORTEZ* Ministerio de Defensa limbert.cortez@mindef.gob.bo	HUGO ALSINA Ministerio de Defensa hugo@alsina-et-al.org
COLOMBIA	
LEONEL BOHÓRQUEZ* Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores lbohorquezr@cancilleria.gov.co VIANYS AGUADELO Autoridad Nacional de Acuicultura y Pesca vianys.agudelo@aunap.gov.co DIANA ÁLVAREZ Autoridad Nacional de Acuicultura y Pesca diana.alvarez@aunap.gov.co WILBERTO ÁNGULO Autoridad Nacional de Acuicultura y Pesca wilberto.angulo@aunap.gov.co RAFAEL DAZA Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores rafael.daza@cancilleria.gov.co JAVIER GARCÍA Ministerio de Comercio, Industria y Turismo jgarciap@mincit.gov.co	GUSTAVO LARA Ministerio de Ambiente y Desarrollo Sostenible GLara@minambiente.gov.co CARMEN LÓPEZ Ministerio de Ambiente y Desarrollo Sostenible calopezanaya@minambiente.gov.co CHRISTIAN MARRUGO Ministerio de Agricultura y Desarrollo Rural cristhian.marrugo@minagricultura.gov.co SANDRA MUÑOZ Ministerio de Agricultura y Desarrollo Rural sandra.munoz@minagricultura.gov.co ENRIQUE DE LA VEGA Seatech International edelavega@seatechint.com GERMAN FONSECA Programa Nacional de Observadores german.fonseca@pescalimpia.org
ECUADOR	
SERGIO PALOMEQUE* Ministerio de Producción, Comercio Exterior, Inversiones y Pesca spalomeque@produccion.gob.ec JORGE BLACIO Ministerio de Producción, Comercio Exterior, Inversiones y Pesca jblacio@produccion.gob.ec LUCIANO DELGADO Ministerio de Producción, Comercio Exterior, Inversiones y Pesca ldelgados@produccion.gob.ec REBECA ESPINOZA Ministerio de Producción, Comercio Exterior, Inversiones y Pesca respinoza@produccion.gob.ec	JOSTYN SÁNCHEZ Ministerio de Producción, Comercio Exterior, Inversiones y Pesca jsanchezv@produccion.gob.ec LUIGI BENINCASA Atunec luigibenincasa@gmail.com PEDRO SANTISTEVAN Tunacons psantistevan@tunacons.org LUIS TORRES Probecuador probecuador@gve.satnet.net JORGE VILLAVICENCIO Tunacons abjorgevillavicenciomendoza@gmail.com
ESTADOS UNIDOS DE AMÉRICA - UNITED STATES OF AMERICA	
COLIN BRINKMAN* U.S. Department of State Brinkmance@state.gov LUCILLE BULKELEY NOAA/National Marine Fisheries Service lucille.bulkeley@noaa.gov DEREK CAMPBELL NOAA/National Marine Fisheries Service derek.campbell@noaa.gov	TYLER LAWSON NOAA/National Marine Fisheries Service tyler.lawson@noaa.gov WILLIAM STAHNKE NOAA/National Marine Fisheries Service william.stahnke@noaa.gov RACHAEL WADSWORTH NOAA/National Marine Fisheries Service rachael.wadsworth@noaa.gov
GUATEMALA	

BERNAL CHAVARRÍA* Ministerio de Agricultura y Ganadería bchavarria@lsg-cr.com	
MÉXICO- MEXICO	
ISABEL C. REYES Comisión Nacional de Acuacultura y Pesca Isabel.reyes@conapesca.gob.mx GUSTAVO LÓPEZ Comisión Nacional de Acuacultura y Pesca gustavo.lopez@conapesca.gob.mx BERTHA SOLER Comisión Nacional de Acuacultura y Pesca bertha.soler@conapesca.gob.mx MARTHA BETANCOURT Fidemar martha.betancourt@uabc.edu.mx MICHEL DREYFUS Fidemar dreyfus@cicese.mx	ARMANDO DÍAZ Fidemar adiaz@cicese.mx ARMANDO GALINDO Fidemar armandogalindo09@hotmail.com GUILLERMO COMPEÁN Alianza del Pacífico por el Atún Sustentable gacompean@hotmail.com MARIANA RAMOS Alianza del Pacífico por el Atún Sustentable ramoss.mariana@gmail.com ALFONSO ROSIÑOL Industria arosinol@oceanoindustrial.com
NICARAGUA	
ROBERTO CHACÓN Instituto Nicaraguense de la Pesca y Acuicultura rchacon@inpesca.gob.ni JULIO GUEVARA Comisionado juliocgq@hotmail.com	KAROLA SIRIAS Atunes de Nicaragua Sociedad Anónima k_27@hotmail.es ARMANDO SEGURA Nicatuna S.A. segura@ibw.com.ni
PANAMÁ - PANAMA	
ELIZABETH BETHANCOURT ARAP ebethancourt@arap.gob.pa YARKELIA VERGARA ARAP yvergara@arap.gob.pa	MARÍA P. DÍAZ Fipesca mpdiaz@fipesca.com ENRIQUE ESPINOZA Pronaob pronaob@pronaob.org
VENEZUELA	
ALVIN DELGADO * FUNDATUN adelgadopnov@gmail.com	
SECRETARÍA – SECRETARIAT	
ARNULFO FRANCO, Director afranco@iattc.org MARISOL AGUILAR maguilar@iattc.org RICARDO BELMONTES rbelmontes@iattc.org BARBARA CULLINGFORD bcullingford@iattc.org ROLANDO DENIS rdenis@iattc.org MONICA GALVÁN mgalvan@iattc.org CLAUDIA HERNANDEZ chernandez@iattc.org TERESA MUSANO tmusano@iattc.org	SANTIAGO OLIVARES solivares@iattc.org JEAN-FRANCOIS PULVENIS jpulvenis@iattc.org NORA ROA nroa@iattc.org PAULINA ROMAN proman@iattc.org ARIADNA SOSA asosa@iattc.org ENRIQUE UREÑA eurena@iattc.org BRAD WILEY bwiley@iattc.org

Annex 2

AGREEMENT ON THE INTERNATIONAL DOLPHIN CONSERVATION PROGRAM

50TH MEETING OF THE PARTIES

La Jolla California (USA)

(Hybrid format)

25-26 March 2025

RESOLUTION A-25-01

AIDCP BUDGET 2025

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

Agree:

1. To welcome the contents of documents AIDCP-50-01, *Analysis of on-board observer tasks*, and AIDCP-50-02, *Evaluation of time dedicated by IATTC staff to AIDCP tasks*, on the understanding that these documents shall be updated and presented to the Parties by the Secretariat, together with the respective budgets, at each time the AIDCP budgets are submitted for evaluation and approval.
2. To accept the Secretariat's recommendation regarding the sharing of the cost of the On-Board Observer Program equally between the AIDCP and IATTC.
3. Recognize that the total budgeted cost for in 2025 for the AIDCP Program according to the adjusted income and expenses breakdown (per document AIDCP-50-03 Rev) is US\$ 3,636,526 (three million six hundred thirty-six thousand five hundred twenty-six dollars), out of which the On-Board Observer Program cost is US\$2,598,775 (two million five hundred ninety-eight thousand four hundred and seventy-five dollars) which, in application of the equal portion of the cost for the IATTC and the AIDCP, would correspond to the payment against the budget of the latter, the amount of US\$ 1,299,388 (one million two hundred ninety-nine thousand three hundred eighty-eight dollars)¹.
4. To approve the proposal for the AIDCP Adjusted Budget for the year 2025 that the Secretariat presents as part of Document AIDCP-50-03, expenses for a total amount of US\$ 2,337,139 (two million three hundred thirty-three thousand one hundred thirty-nine dollars), modifying what was agreed in the first paragraph of Resolution A-24-01, as follows:

“Noting that the total budgeted cost for 2025 AIDCP Program according to the adjusted income and expenses breakdown is US\$ 3.636,526 (three million six hundred thirty-six thousand five hundred twenty-six dollars), out of which the On-Board Observer Program cost is US\$2,598,775 2 (two million five hundred ninety-eight thousand four hundred and seventy-five dollars) in application of the equal portion of the cost for the IATTC and the AIDCP,

¹ Note that during the discussion of this Resolution, the Secretariat updated the figures provided in the document available in the web page which shall be identified as AIDCP-50-03 and the Secretariat shall update the document accordingly to AIDCP-50-03-REV 1.

- a) To approve the AIDCP 2025 expenses (non observer) up to the amount of US\$ 981.121 (nine hundred eighty-one thousand one hundred twenty-one dollars) and the AIDCP share for Observer Program up to US\$ 1,299,387 (one million two hundred ninety-nine thousand three hundred eighty-seven dollars) against a projected income of US\$2,443,258 (two million four hundred forty-three thousand two hundred fifty-eight dollars), along with the US\$820,000 budgeted contribution provided by the IATTC.
- b) Considering the possibility that the sum of the amount the AIDCP has allocated for the observer program (US\$1,299,388) together with the amount that IATTC has allocated for the same (US\$ 820,000) does not cover the full cost in 2025, exceptionally and for one-time only, authorize the following:
 - i. The use of any extraordinary income from interests derived from the investment of AIDCP funds, new vessels and/or past-due assessment.
 - ii. The utilization of the portion of surplus that had been approved and not committed for consumption in fiscal year 2024.
- c) In the event that after the utilization of these funds a deficit remains, the corresponding portion shall be covered with additional funds from the surplus, in the event that the IATTC does not provide those funds and on the understanding that it is considered as an advance payment for the services and costs corresponding to the tasks that the IATTC develops as Secretariat within the framework of the AIDCP in the year 2026.»