

9th meeting of the Parties to the Agreement on the International Dolphin Conservation Program

Continuing downward trend in mortality of dolphins

Mr. Arnulfo Franco, Director General of Marine Resources of Panama, chairman of the 9th meeting of the Parties to the Agreement on the International Dolphin Conservation Program (AIDCP), which was held in Antigua, Guatemala during 23-25 June, announced that the mortality of dolphins incidental to tuna fishing in the eastern Pacific was continuing its downward trend. He also said that the preliminary estimated mortality in 2002 was 1514 dolphins compared to 2133 in 2001. Large yellowfin tuna are often associated with dolphins in the eastern Pacific Ocean and there is some incidental mortality of dolphins during fishing. Mr. Franco said that the trend reflected the success of the program and the dedicated work of fishermen in rescuing dolphins.

The meeting was also marked by the adoption of a Plan of Action to Enhance the Success of the Agreement. The Plan includes consideration of a range of research issues that will address areas of uncertainty in knowledge of dolphins in the eastern Pacific, additional measures for dolphin conservation, improvements in compliance with the Agreement, and actions to increase public awareness of the benefits of the IDCP and its dolphin safe tuna certification system.

The Agreement has 15 parties: Bolivia, Colombia, Costa Rica, Ecuador, El Salvador, the European Union, Honduras, Guatemala, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Peru, the United States, Vanuatu, and Venezuela. Its objectives are to progressively reduce incidental mortality of dolphins in the tuna purse-seine fishery in the area, and to ensure the sustainability of marine resources related to the fishery. The Area of the Agreement stretches from the coast of the Americas between Canada and Chile to almost Hawaii in the north and French Polynesia in the south.

(Further information is available from www.iattc.org)