

INTERNATIONAL DOLPHIN CONSERVATION PROGRAM
MEETING OF THE PERMANENT WORKING GROUP ON TUNA TRACKING

La Jolla, California, U.S.A.
October 27, 2000

CHAIR'S REPORT TO THE INTERNATIONAL REVIEW PANEL

The meeting was attended by representatives of Colombia, Costa Rica, Ecuador, El Salvador, European Union, Japan, Mexico, Peru, United States of America, Vanuatu and Venezuela, Humane Society, Whale and Dolphin Conservation Society, and the tuna industry. The agenda is attached (Appendix A).

Ecuador reported a modification to its national plan that was adopted to deal with situations that arise when no representative of the national authority is available to meet a vessel. Under this procedure, the IATTC observer obtains the vessel captain's signature on the Tuna Tracking Forms (TTFs) and provides the captain with a copy of the forms. The observer does not sign the form at this time, but instead takes the original to the office of the national authority or, if that is not possible, to the IATTC office, where the form is signed by the observer and a copy is made for the IATTC. The original, signed copy is then forwarded to the national authority. Ecuador has provided this modification in writing to the Secretariat.

The Working Group discussed the issue of the difficulty of submitting TTFs to national authorities when the vessels are not met at the end of trips, particularly since the information on the forms is considered confidential. It was agreed that national tuna-tracking plans should contain the necessary mechanisms to protect the confidentiality of the TTFs while providing necessary dolphin safe documentation to those who require it.

The collection of data by observers of the On-Board Observer Program outside the Agreement Area was discussed. Some delegations considered that, if a vessel made a trip in which it operated both inside and outside the Agreement Area, the observer should collect information for the entire trip, and also include in the TTFs all applicable information on catches. Although there is no obligation to comply with the provisions of the Agreement in fishing operations which take place outside the Agreement Area, in order to ensure transparency, the collection of all information on such fishing trips should be permitted. Pending approval by the IRP, the Working Group asked the Secretariat to draft this modification to the Tuna Tracking System, to be submitted for approval to the first Meeting of the Parties in 2001.

The Working Group discussed the problem of vessels that make several unloadings during a single trip. Pending approval by the IRP, the Working Group asked the Secretariat to prepare a modification to the Tuna Tracking System to delineate how copies of the TTFs may be made and provided to Parties in the event of several partial unloadings. This modification will also be submitted for approval to the first Meeting of the Parties in 2001.

The Secretariat presented a progress report on the Tuna Tracking System (Appendix B), and several countries reported progress towards the preparation, adoption and/or implementation of national tuna tracking plans. The Working Group agreed that it would review these plans at its next meeting, and that to this end all Parties should forward their plans to the Secretariat before the end of 2000 for circulation to all Parties. At present the Secretariat has received the plans of Ecuador, Mexico, Panama, the United States, and Venezuela.

Noting that several Parties were not sending copies of the completed TTFs to the Secretariat, the Working Group stressed the importance of complying with the requirement of the Tuna Tracking System that these copies be sent to the Secretariat within ten days of receiving the forms. It was agreed that those Parties that had not provided these copies for past trips would do so as soon as possible.

The next meeting of the Working Group will be held in conjunction with the 26th meeting of the IRP in January 2001.