

COMISION INTERAMERICANA DEL ATUN TROPICAL INTER-AMERICAN TROPICAL TUNA COMISSION

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Ref.: 0150-420

To: AIDCP Parties
IATTC Commissioners and Heads of Delegation

From: Alvin Delgado, Chair of the AIDCP Meeting of the Parties

Alfonso Miranda, Chair of the IATTC

Re: COVID19 pandemic – AIDCP and IATTC observers' programs – required measures

First, we wish to commend all the efforts of both by the IATTC Director and staff (see e.g. memorandums ref. 0138-410 and 0142-410, dated 19 and 20 March respectively) and the national programs to continue placing observers on board fishing vessels, in compliance with the AIDCP, the Antigua Convention and the various rules and procedures adopted for their implementation.

However, the unprecedented and unforeseeable situation resulting from the COVID 19 pandemic is evolving rapidly. We must face the moment in which it may become impossible, in spite of the best efforts of all concerned, to place an observer on board a vessel, for a number of reasons or circumstances that it is not necessarily to list here.

After contacting and consulting with a number of you, and convinced that priority must be given to the right to food security and the need to continue ensuring the provision of food to the people, and also taking into account decisions taken in other regions by RFMOs regarding their respective observer programs, we strongly recommend that we agree on the following:

1. Any vessel for which it is impossible to place an observer on board in compliance with the applicable IATTC and AIDCP rules shall be exempted of its corresponding obligations;
2. This temporary exemption shall not constitute a blanket suspension of the obligation of carrying an observer on board, but shall be granted case-by-case for each vessel and for each trip;
3. Owners and operators of vessels shall continue requesting the placement of observers in accordance with the applicable AIDCP and IATTC rules and procedures; when it would result impossible to comply with the request, the IATTC Director or, by his express delegation, the head of the field office, will grant an exemption to the vessel for the trip, in close coordination with the flag State fisheries authorities and the relevant national program and with their approval;
4. The necessary arrangements shall be made to avoid all unnecessary delays in the granting of the exemption;
5. The granting of such exemptions shall be limited to the period of emergency resulting from the COVID 19 and will be canceled as soon as full normalcy can be restored in the operation of the AIDCP/ IATTC and national observers' programs;
6. In these cases of vessels operating without observers aboard, the captain shall be responsible for collection, recording and reporting of data and information, until such time as it is possible to resume normal deployment of onboard observers.
7. Fishing activities by a vessel with an exemption granted as described above shall not be considered as a case of non-compliance and shall not constitute, among others, a basis for discriminating or hampering the trade of fish and fish products from that vessel.

In view of the urgency of the situation and its exceptional character, we propose that this agreement be considered as endorsed by all AIDCP Parties and IATTC Members, in the absence of any objection within a week from the date of this memorandum.