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South American River Dolphin's CMP: 2022-2023 updates

Presented By The Governments Of Brazil, Colombia, Ecuador And Peru

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SC69A

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CMP Coordinator: Fernando Trujillo, PhD
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Introduction

River dolphins are among the most threatened species of cetaceans on the planet due to the degradation and transformation of fluvial habitats. Recently the IUCN updated the threat category of *Inia geoffrensis* and *Sotalia fluviatilis* from DD to EN (da Silva *et al*., 2018; da Silva et al., 2020), supporting this change on some population trends in areas where a drastic decrease in the number of river dolphins is observed, as well as the overall increase in the magnitude of threats such as deforestation, loss of connectivity of rivers by dams, contamination by mercury, overfishing and directed catches. Despite the fact that the Amazon is at the center of international environmental discussion, threats do not seem to be diminishing, but rather increasing. Every year, deforestation figures increase, more dams are built and river connectivity is interrupted, intense fishing activity generates bycatch and at the same time depletion of fish stocks that serve as food not only for dolphins, but also for millions of people living in the region. Likewise, mercury contamination from illegal gold mining and deforestation does not let up, as well as climatic alterations that cause many dolphins to be trapped every year in regions such as the Orinoco and the Bolivian Amazon in rivers that dry up abruptly.

The situation became more critical considering the genetic uncertainty of the genus *Inia* because several researchers recognized *Inia boliviensis* and *Inia araguiaensis* as different species, and with exacerbated vulnerability due to population fragmentation in *I. araguaiaensis* and limited geographic distribution of both species.

Faced with the threat to these species, the governments of the region have generated national action plans to protect them. However, since these are shared watersheds, coordinated regional actions are required between governments to guarantee the ecological integrity of the rivers. For this reason, in 2020 the governments of Brazil, Colombia, Peru and Ecuador announced before the IWC Scientific Committee their intention to jointly build a Conservation Management Plan (CMP). This initiative was approved in September 2021 and since then efforts have been carried out with the objective of complying with the five thematic lines and 32 prioritized actions for dolphin conservation.

At the meeting of the 2022 Scientific Committee, the governments showed actions supported by civil society (NGOs, Institutes, universities), aimed at research and monitoring actions, with an investment of more than US$820,000.

Subsequently, it was identified as a priority to advance in the analysis of opportunities to reduce threats based on the policies and regulatory frameworks of each country. This led to

a meeting of representatives from the four countries in Bogota in March 2023 to develop a strategy to advance in the articulation and coordination of policies at the regional level, as well as the search for funds to implement the CMP.

This document presents the progress made since May 2022 to date on the goals and actions set forth in the South American river dolphin CMP.

CMP Objectives and Outcomes

Main Objective:

Promote the conservation of river dolphin species (*Inia geoffrensis, Inia boliviensis, Inia araguaiaensis* and *Sotalia fluviatilis*) in the Amazon, Orinoco and Tocantins/Araguaia basins through a regional concerted strategy.

RESEARCH-1. Continue to Investigate Taxonomy and Stock Identification

1. **Population Structure**

Population structure and stock identity of Amazon river dolphins through molecular techniques (museomics and geometric morphometrics)

- Initial RAD sequences analyses on samples from the Colombian Amazon. Three regions in the Colombian Orinoco and one sample from the Bolivian Amazon. Four population units described (Susana Caballero, Larissa Oliveira, Waleska Gravena, Michael McGowen).

MON-1. Monitor Abundance, Trends and Effects of Anthropogenic Activities

2. **Abundance, trends and bycatch**

- Abundance Expedition in the Tocantins River (Brazil) - July 2022 (WWF Brazil, Mamirauá, Society of Marine Mammals).
- Abundance and trends estimate in Solimões River (Brazil)(Mamirauá Institute).
- Abundance estimation and population trends in Amazon river (Ecuador-Peru-Colombia-Brazil)(National Geographic, Omacha Foundation).
- Abundance estimation and population trends in Meta river (Colombia/Venezuela)(Omacha Foundation, Proyecto Sotalia, WWF Colombia, Whitley Fund for Nature).
- Weekly counts for estimation of dolphin abundance at the Tarapoto Ramsar/OMEC site (Colombia)(Omacha Foundation, National Geographic).

- Base line and citizen science with youths - expedition in Pastaza basin 2022 (WWF Ecuador, INABIO).
- Abundance estimations by citizen science, involving fishermen in the upper Mamore River (Bolivia)(Faunagua, WWF Bolivia).
- Abundance estimations by citizen science, involving fishermen in the San Martin River (Bolivia) (Faunagua, WWF Bolivia).
- Trend in Abundance analysis - four places in the Amazon region (Brazil, Colombia, Peru, Ecuador)(Omacha foundation, Aqualie Institute, WWF-Brazil, Mamiraua Institute).
- River Ucayali 2022 Abundance Expedition (Peru)(WWF Peru, Solinia, IIAP, CREA).

3. Evaluate the use of alternative, more economic, standardize methods to assess trends in abundance (passive acoustic monitoring)

- Pilot project FPODS in Tarapoto Ramsar/OMEC site (Colombia)(Omacha Foundation, Aqualie Institute, Chelonia Limited).
- Practice Innovation Fund 2022-2023 - Roraima (Aqualie Institute, Chelonia Limited, WWF-Brazil, WWF-Holanda, WWF-Internacional, WWF-Pakistan).
- Foto - Identification in Cuyabeno Ramsar Site 2022/2023 (WWF Ecuador).

MONITORING-1. Monitor Abundance, Trends and Effects of Anthropogenic Activities

4. Bycatch in Amazonian fisheries

- Assessment of local information in Central Amazon and regional assessment in Amazonian Brazilian States (WWF Brazil, Mamirauá Institute).
- Bycatch diagnosis in fisheries of Loreto and Ucayali regions (Peru)(WWF Peru).

5. Eradication of killing of river dolphins (piracatinga fishery)

- Virtual meetings on the piracatinga issue (Mamirauá Institute, Federal Government, civil society institutions).
- Publication of report on *Calophysus* fisheries in Bolivia and follow-up of impact (Faunagua, WWF Bolivia).

6. Evaluation of ecological effect of habitat fractioning caused by dams in river dolphins

No activities were carried out in any country at this point.

7. Assess mercury and other heavy metal contaminants on river dolphins and fish

- Mercury analysis in river dolphins in Amazon rivers (Colombia/Peru)(Omacha Foundation, National Geographic).
- Mercury analysis in fish in Orinoco rivers (Colombia/Venezuela)(Whitley Fund for Nature, Fundacion Omacha).

- Mercury analysis in fish in Bolivia (Faunagua, WWF Bolivia).

8. Develop and implement a river dolphins' database with information on abundance, distribution, threats, research efforts, and research gaps.

- The South American River Dolphin Initiative (SARDI) Dashboard (Mamirauá Institute, Omacha Foundation, Solinia, Faunagua, Proyecto Sotalia, Instituto Aqualite, WWF Bolivia, Brazil, WWF Colombia, WWF Ecuador and WWF Peru).
- Thesis on acoustic monitoring of river dolphins and their relationship with boat traffic at the confluence of the Amazon and Loretoyacu rivers in Colombia (Omacha Foundation, National Geographic).
- Underwater ecological characterization of river dolphin habitat in the Tarapoto Lakes Ramsar site in Colombia (Omacha Foundation, National Geographic).
- Pilot study area for monitoring in the Middel Araguaia River to produce density and abundance data (WWF-Brazil, SEMAD-Goiás, UniEvangélica, Mamiraua Institute).

9. Assess and monitor the translocation of dolphins in rivers with dams (i.e. Tocantins).

- II Araguaian river dolphin workshop - Chalenges and Opportunities (Virtual)(WWF Brazil, Mamirauá, Aqualie Institute).

- I REBOTO workshop - gaps in information on fish stock and hidrical resources (virtual)(SEMAD-Goiás, WWF-Brazil, Mamiraua, Aqualie Institute, Unievangélica).

10. Update the processes of categorization and recategorization of river dolphin species according to IUCN criteria and the regulations of the countries to generate concrete actions on the threat factors.

- No activities were carried out for this action.

11. Evaluate methods to reduce bycatch (e.g. development of alternative fishing methods, pingers, fishery agreements, no-take areas).

- Pilot tests of pingers in Tapajós River (WWF Brazil).

MITIGATION 2. Develop or apply conservation strategies

12. Monitor river dolphins in protected areas with the support of rangers and local communities.

- Monitoring of river dolphins in Tarapoto Ramsar/OMEC site in Colombia, working with local indigenous communities (Omacha foundation, National Geographic).
- Monitoring of dolphins in the Yasuni National Park (MAATE, INABIO, PNY, WWF).

13. Training workshops for fishermen to promote good fishing practices and eventually dolphin rescue and release.

- Online workshop: disentanglement of small cetaceans in the Amazon basin (Randy Wells)(SARDI).
- Conflict/Coexistence workshop in lower Tapajós river for riverdolphins protection: changing behaviours and promoting good practices of fishing and coexistence between boto and fishermen (WWF Brazil, Sapopema, ICMBio, UFOPA, EZALQ/USP, SEMA, MOPEBAM, Federações de Pesca do Baixo Tapajós, Colônia de Pesca de Aveiro, Itaituba e Santarém, artisanal fishermen from local communities).

14. Increase surveillance, control and enforcement for the conservation of the river dolphins in protected areas and critical habitats.

- Training program for the management, and mitigation of mortality of river dolphins in the Cuyabeno Ramsar Site (WWF Ecuador).

15. Evaluate the potential impact of future dams projects on river dolphins an aquatic diversity.

- No actions reported

16. Implement provisions of the Minamata Convention for the reduction of mercury in the Amazon, Orinoco and Tocantins basins.

- No actions reported

17. Promote actions to reduce deforestation and habitat loss.

- Planting 12.080 trees at Ramsar site Tarapoto with the local communities. Flooded forest restauration (Colombia)(Omacha foundation, National Geographic, Norwegian Fund).

18. Identify strategic and priority sites for the life cycle of species.

- Tagging 6 river dolphins in the River Amazon/ Tarapoto Ramsar site (Omacha foundation, National Geographic, Solinia, WWF Colombia, WWF Peru).
- Tagging 5 river dolphins in Amanã Lake, Central Amazon, Mosaic of protected areas (WWF Brazil, Mamirauá Institute).
- Dashboard and smart science for decision making (SARDI).

19. Prioritize the most effective conservation actions at site and landscape level.

- Training workshops for rescue of dolphins stranded due to climate change and hydrological stress in Arauca, Colombia. 2022 (Omacha foundation, Environment corporations, Whitley Fund for Nature).

- Implementation of river dolphin health assessment in the framework of the tagging campaigns (Omacha foundation, National Geographic, Whitley Fund for Nature).

20. Identify and specify the conservation status of the species in the planning instruments of the conservation strategies.

- Publication of Colombia's Aquatic Mammal Management Plan 2022-2035 (Ministry of Environment and Sustainable Development of Colombia, Fundación Omacha, WWF, CI).

21. Design and harmonize cross-border cooperation actions.

- No actions reported

22. Create and implement Management Plans for existing PAs in Colombia, Brazil, Ecuador and Peru incorporating river dolphins as key species.

- Implementation of actions of the management plan for the Bita River, Estrella Fluvial de Inírida and Tarapoto Lakes Ramsar sites (Omacha foundation, WWF Colombia, Minambiente, CDA (GEFCA project), Forest Conservation Agreement).
- CARDS Lite evaluation of management effectiveness and dolphin conservation practices in 10 protected areas (Faunagua, WWF Bolivia).
- Full CARDS evaluation of management effectiveness and dolphin conservation practices in the PD ANMI Itenez (Faunagua, WWF Bolivia).

23. Promote new Ramsar sites in key areas for river dolphins to strengthen management.

- Designación de 33 OMECs en la Amazonia y Orinoquia colombiana (8.144.790 ha)(Ministry of the Environment Colombia, CARs, CI).

MITIGATION-3. Promote the implementation of national action plans to reduce interactions between river dolphins and fisheries

23. Strengthen control and monitoring measures to avoid the use of river dolphins as bait for the piracatinga fishery.

- No actions reported

24. Strengthen or establish responsible trade chains that privilege trade in products obtained responsibly.

- Elaboration of an action plan for commercial fisheries in the Mamore basin as a first step towards fisheries governance (Faunagua, WWF Bolivia).

25. Encourage technical support between local communities, fishery authorities and Governments to control the piracatinga fishery based on the killing of river dolphins

- Monitoring of the Fisheries Authority in ports of the Amazon and airports in Colombia (AUNAP).

PACB-1. Develop a strategy to increase public awareness of river dolphins

26. Design and implement a public awareness campaign promoting river dolphin's conservation.

- Celebration of the International River Dolphin day (24th October). More than 75.000 people reached in several countries (South American River Dolphin Initiative).
- WWF Ecuador intern strategy (WWF Ecuador).
- SARDI Initiative (all countries).
- Araguaian boto booklet developed joint to SEMAD-Goiás and awareness campaign (Advocacy through the participation of the Inland Waters Technical Group (Ministry of Production) sharing WWF Peru's activities and promoting river dolphin conservation).
- Co-organization of the II International Virtual Symposium on Research and Innovation of CADAP (Amazonian Council for the Development of Aquaculture, Fisheries and MSEs in Peru) called "Amazonian Fisheries and Aquaculture as a Guarantee of Food Sovereignty", in which the topics of population monitoring of river dolphins were positioned, through the presentation of the experience of the Napo-Aguarico expedition, as well as the presentation of the diagnosis of bycatch and implementation of acoustic deterrent devices in the Peruvian Amazon (WWF Perú, Regional Directories of Production, ANA, IIAP, IMARPE, IVITA, PRODUCE, Ministry of Environment, SERNANP, DEVIDA, WCS, IBC
- Workshop to define CADAP's (Amazonian Council for the Development of Aquaculture, Fisheries and MSEs in Peru) action plan towards 2025, where priority was given to the implementation of the research and innovation agenda that includes ecological studies of aquatic species (WWF Perú, Regional Directories of Production, ANA, IIAP, IMARPE, IVITA, PRODUCE, Ministry of Environment, SERNANP, DEVIDA, WCS, IBC).
- Advocacy through the participation of the Inland Waters Technical Group (Ministry of Production) sharing WWF Peru's activities and promoting river dolphin conservation (WWF Perú, IIAP, Ministry of Production, Ministry of Environment, Natural History Museum of UNMSM, IMARPE, Pro Delphinus, WCS Perú, SANIPES, CADAP, IBC).

27. Include in educational programs topics related to ecology and conservation of river dolphins.

Environmental education workshop on manatee and river dolphin ecology for students of tourism, biology and environmental engineering from Iquitos (Loreto), as part of a workshop on manatee management and data collection (WWF Peru, CREA).

28. Build capacity on river dolphin conservation focused on different stakeholders (e.g. fishermen, park rangers, tourism agencies, indigenous communities, hydroelectric companies).

- Capacity building for technicians, park rangers, naturalist guides, tourism company managers and local fishermen on the importance of conserving river dolphins (WWF Ecuador, MAATE & BYOS).

- Capacity building for local naturalist guides, tourism company managers and local fishermen on the importance of conserving river dolphins (Omacha Foundation, National Geographic, Whitley Fund for Nature, CDA).

29. Socialize in each country the policy and legal instruments, action plans, and initiatives around river dolphin conservation (stakeholders, fishermen, indigenous communities).

- Meetings with Research Institutes, Fishery Authority and National Parks in Colombia to socialize the South American River dolphin's CMP (2023)(Ministry of Environment of Colombia).
- CARDS lite surveys conducted to 8 CPA's head offices in Peru (WWF Peru, SERNANP).

PACB-2. Include the river dolphins in Bilateral and Multilateral Discussions

- Workshop of the governments of Brazil, Colombia, Ecuador and Peru to evaluate policies and regulatory frameworks to reduce threats to river dolphins and their habitats (Governments of Brazil, Colombia, Ecuador and Peru. WWF Brazil, WWF Colombia, Omacha foundation).

30. Propose on the OCTA agenda the coordination for the implementation of the CMP.

31. Propose support for the implementation of the CMP on the agenda of the Neighborhood Commissions.

32. Promote collaboration agreements among stakeholders, such as NGOs and research institutes (2025-2035).

Of the 32 actions proposed in the CMP in the period between May 2022 and April 2023, progress has been made in 26 (81.5%), with an investment of US$501.500 from different organizations. The level of investment was lower than last year, but a great diversity of actions was maintained in all strategic lines. Undoubtedly, the most outstanding was the workshop between governments of Brazil, Colombia, Ecuador and Peru, that allowed the analysis of policies and regulations aimed at reducing five main threats to river dolphins:

- Deforestation
- Conflicts with fisheries (bycatch, directed catch).
- Climate change - water stress
- Water pollution - Mercury/hydrocarbons
- Loss of river connectivity due to hydroelectric dams

Additionally, socio-environmental conflicts in aquatic ecosystems inhabited by river dolphins were considered.

The items analyzed during the workshop were:

- Successful threat mitigation cases
- Transboundary situations and opportunities
- Bottlenecks to implement actions
- Action Plan to advance the CMP
- Next steps and financial strategy

1. **Successful cases to highlight:**

- In Brazil, sustainable tourism has been consolidated in the Mamirauá Sustainable Reserve, becoming a model for the region. It has also been preparing regulations for tourism activities involving swimming with dolphins in several regions.

- Safeguards have been established between the interaction between human communities and wildlife to reduce conflicts.

- Forest protection and reforestation policies: Government policies aimed at achieving broad-based social and economic development, particularly for urban workers, peasants and landless workers in the rural sector, were established.
- Social programs to reduce poverty and hunger, such as "Fome Zero" (Zero Hunger) and Bolsa Familia (Family Allowance).

- These programs were major successes, reducing the country's poverty rate from over 34 percent to less than 23 percent in the six years since Lula's election in 2002. Hunger and malnutrition rates dropped significantly, and there was remarkable progress in reducing economic inequality (Source: Union of Concerned Scientists, 2014.

- New Ramsar sites: in the Negro River, which includes 20 protected areas and the Amazon Delta (forming a large ecological corridor).

- For more than 10 years, dolphin-watching tourism has been practiced in Colombia, which on the one hand generates economic income for local communities and on the other reinforces conservation strategies for these species. More recently, in 2022, training for nature tourism guides and operators has been carried out in San José del Guaviare. This area is one of the most affected by deforestation in the country, and this type of economic activity

such as tourism provides sustainable alternatives, which even involve former FARC guerrilla fighters, thus boosting the peace process signed at the national level.

- To curb deforestation, monitoring programs have been established in the Amazon rainforest by the Institute of Hydrology, Meteorology and Environmental Studies (IDEAM), the SINCHI Research Institute and other platforms to detect illegal activities in real time. The National Army, in coordination with the Ministry of Environment and Sustainable Development and the Colombian Natural National Parks, has been implementing Operation Artemisa to reduce deforestation.

- In the Colombian Amazonian trapezoid, Fundación Omacha's "Pepeaderos para la vida" program has been consolidated in the Tarapoto lakes Ramsar/OMEC site, which has contributed to the restoration of the flooded forest with the planting of more than 30,000 native trees by 600 indigenous families. This restoration is focused on guaranteeing seeds (food) for fish and maintaining fisheries in good condition.

- Through research and monitoring of river dolphins, it was possible to consolidate information on biodiversity that allowed the designation of three Ramsar sites with an area of more than one million hectares: Ramsar Site/OMEC Estrella Fluvial de Inírida (EFI), Ramsar Site/OMEC Bita River and Ramsar Site/OMEC Tarapoto Lakes. All of them have management plans and articulation between governmental and local stakeholders. These three sites have been receiving resources from the GEF Heart of the Amazon and GEF Orinoco projects.

- In the Bita River Ramsar/OMEC site, the management plan has been implemented in coordination with the Basin Management Plan (POMCA), promoting fisheries management, fire management and conservation agreements for several endangered species such as river dolphins.
- In Ecuador, the Landscapes and Wildlife program is in operation with WCS, working with local fish species. Likewise, the Socio bosque program supports the conservation of Amazonian forests with local communities.

- Map of terrestrial ecosystems with land use fragility analysis (2012). Manages early warnings of deforestation due to land use.

- Ecuador has a wildlife trafficking control program with agreements with Colombia and Peru.

- The creation of a conservation corridor in the Napo/Putumayo axis with the coordination of three protected areas: the Cuyabeno RF (Ecuador), Güepi National Park (Peru) and La Paya National Park (Colombia).

- In Bolivia, Venezuela and Colombia, capacity has been built to respond to dolphin strandings due to abrupt reductions in river flows (climate change and water stress).

- The GEF's Sustainable Landscapes initiative is operating in Brazil, Colombia and Peru.

2. Some tools and opportunities were identified to address some of the threats:

- Report by WWF and GAIA Amazonas Foundation with the support of the United Nations Environment Program, which reveals commercial mercury flows to the Amazon region (https://www.wwf.org.co/?360290/De-donde-viene-el-mercurio-que-envenena-la-Amazonia).

- Given the high commercial value of gold and the global market, it is unfeasible to prohibit its extraction, but a technological development and transfer is proposed to avoid mercury contamination directly to miners and indirectly to all human communities in the region.

- Ecuador has a methodological toolbox for including climate change issues in the land use plans of the Decentralized Autonomous Governments.

- Local actors (firefighters, environmental police, community action boards) are being trained to rescue dolphins trapped by falling rivers (Colombia, Venezuela, Bolivia). It is important to analyze not only the effects of climate change, but also the effects of agro-industrial water catchment that may be endangering the ecological integrity of the rivers.

- For the last two years, national and international scenarios have been discussing, with the technical support of the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), the possibility of structuring a protocol for the translocation of dolphins in areas where they are trapped by dams and where their survival could be compromised.

- It is proposed to make more visible the importance of river dolphins as endangered species (EN) in environmental impact studies that may alter the ecological conditions of rivers.

3. Transboundary issues and opportunities

The river dolphin range includes seven countries (Venezuela, Guyana, Brazil, Ecuador, Colombia, Peru and Bolivia) with an area of about 9 million square kilometers. This poses great challenges and opportunities and specific agendas to combat illegal mining, drug trafficking, deforestation and illegal species trafficking. Some of these were highlighted at the workshop:

- Conduct and promote transboundary expeditions to estimate dolphin abundance and monitor threats in rivers. Dolphins can be seen as indicator and priority species of river health.

- Create an observatory in the Amazon region focused on aquatic biodiversity. Possibly articulated with ACTO. One project could be transboundary integration for the conservation of large migratory catfish and dolphins in the Amazon and Orinoquia.

- One opportunity is the integration with initiatives and projects of the Latin American Network for Technical Cooperation in National Parks, other Protected Areas, Wild Flora and Fauna (RedParques), such as the Amazon Vision Initiative.

- Strengthen binational agendas by integrating the issue of aquatic biodiversity. An example of this is to take advantage of the regional initiative of the CMP on river dolphins.
- Given that the harmonization of fishing regulations between countries in the region has been very complex, it is suggested to work on the socialization of these regulations in border areas and on the training of control and surveillance entities (bans, moratoriums, sanctions). It is also proposed to count on the technical support of universities, research institutes and NGOs to evaluate fish stocks and have basic information for adjusting fishing regulations.

- It is necessary to have official fishing statistics in each country in order to understand the evolution of fisheries.

- Strengthen governance, with joint work between governments, scientists, companies and local communities.

- Implement planning instruments such as the Regional Climate Change Plan for the Orinoquia PRICCO.

- Generate a mechanism to present the river dolphin CMP to the OTCA so that it can be accepted by this regional body.

- The creation of new protected areas focused on aquatic ecosystems is identified as necessary. The OMECs could be an interesting conservation figure involving local communities and conservation agreements.

- It is proposed to integrate dolphin monitoring and conservation in protected areas where feasible. Take advantage of existing monitoring tools (SMART) or incorporate others such as CARDs/Lite.

- River dolphin management plans exist in all range countries. These plans can feed into the CMP and vice versa. They are an opportunity to make progress and actions visible.

- It is recommended to establish ecological restoration actions in priority ecosystems for the conservation of dolphins and their habitats.

- In Colombia, it is important to strengthen the environmental component in municipal development plans, including dolphins.

4. Bottlenecks for implementing actions

Although all countries have policies and regulatory frameworks to address threats in the Amazon and Orinoquia, it is often not easy to implement them in these regions. Weak governance, illegal activities and economies pose great challenges for governments to promote the conservation of species and ecosystems. Some critical points identified were:

- Different regulations and laws in each country create problems in coordinating control and surveillance actions. An example of this is in consumer and ornamental fish fisheries. The

reduction in the catch of large catfish led to the search for other target species, such as the piracatinga or mota (*Calophysus* sp), which in turn promoted the illegal use of dolphins as bait. In response, Colombia banned the commercialization of this species in its territory, based on the high mercury content. Brazil has a moratorium on the fishing of this species that has been extended every year. Since this is a product that is traded across borders, this practice has spread to Peru, Bolivia and Venezuela. The permeability of the border zones means that there is an unmonitored flow of fish products with adequate traceability. This situation calls for greater communication between governments and the generation of technical information that will make it possible to identify the problems and possible solutions.
- The permeable border areas also facilitate illegal species trafficking, which is why more training and control is needed at airports and ports in the region with more fluid communication mechanisms between governments.

- There is little inter-institutional coordination within and between countries, which means that processes and actions do not develop harmoniously.

- When there are changes in government, programs and projects are interrupted, mainly affecting environmental and social conservation processes, generally with changes in priorities. The connection between long-term policies and strategies should be promoted.

- With regard to mercury contamination, it was determined that the problem has not been adequately assessed. The existing information is limited and very scattered. It is necessary to standardize the collection and analysis of information. A mercury contamination observatory is proposed in coordination with the Minamata Convention.

- It is a great challenge to promote sustainable economic activities that are attractive and profitable in order to discourage illegal activities that have a high impact on ecosystems and species. Nature-based solutions should be promoted in concert with local communities.

- It has been established that in protected areas dolphins are not defined as a conservation target. In many cases the species considered are terrestrial and not aquatic. Monitoring processes require training and medium and long-term financial resources. In countries such as Colombia, there are also limitations due to public order problems. It is important to consider that until a few years ago dolphins were not reported as threatened species and therefore were not considered in planning exercises. Since the current situation is different, it is necessary to work with area managers and look for inclusion mechanisms.

- There is a need to design and implement impact indicators to evaluate the status of ecosystems and aquatic species.

5. Action Plan to advance the CMP

The South American river dolphin CMP has identified 32 actions in five thematic areas: Research (RES), Monitoring (MON), Mitigation (MIT), Public Awareness and Capacity Building (PACB) and Coordination (COORD). In the first year of the CMP, significant progress was made in the first two categories, but it became evident that there was a need to

make progress in hazard mitigation through the policies and regulatory frameworks of each country. For this reason, one of the results of the workshop was to outline nine goals and several concrete actions that will allow progress to be made both in each country and at the regional level, taking advantage of available instruments, treaties and financial mechanisms.

Financial opportunities

Different opportunities were identified to seek funding to assist in the implementation of the South American river dolphin CMP.

1. United Kingdom

A couple of weeks ago, two funds were launched that operate through calls for proposals for enabling activities, where countries can generate alliances with other actors to present proposals for the protection of biodiversity and the fight against species trafficking.

Illegal Wildlife Trade Challenge Fund (IWTCF):

Projects funded by the IWTCF aim to:

- Reduce demand for illegal wildlife trade products.
- Ensure effective and dissuasive legal frameworks
- Strengthen law enforcement
- Develop sustainable livelihoods to benefit people directly affected by illegal wildlife trade.

Darwin Initiative

The Darwin Initiative is a UK government grant scheme that helps protect biodiversity, the natural environment and the local communities living alongside it in developing countries. Funded projects aim to:

- Creating environmental knowledge
- Capacity building
- Research
- Implementation of international biodiversity agreements

These funds do not directly finance governments or public entities, but alliances can be created with NGOs, academia, institutes and the private sector to apply for proposals.

2. Convention on Biological Diversity

- Accelerator for the implementation of the Post 2020 Framework of the CBD (review NBSAPs of each country for targets).
- GP2020 Special Fund that seeks to mobilize resources through the financial mechanisms approved at CoP15 and that are being regulated in the first half of 2023.

- Resources for capacity building, scientific cooperation and knowledge management linked to the previous point.

3. Freshwater Challenge

- Derived from CoP15, it is a commitment launched by Colombia during the UN Water Conference. It seeks to provide political impetus and mobilize resources to restore freshwater ecosystems. It does not yet have funds; however, it is an initiative to consider.

4. Minamata Convention on Mercury

The Minamata Convention on Mercury, under Article 13, establishes a Specific International Program to support capacity building and technical assistance. The Program is aimed at supporting developing country Parties and Parties with economies in transition in implementing their obligations under the Minamata Convention. So, if there are initiatives that support the fulfillment of these obligations they could be considered, in any case I emphasize that it is always under the provisions of the treaty. If the project proposals that they wish to present are aligned with the program's orientations and guidelines, they could be considered, but there is no funding line for this particular topic.
https://mercuryconvention.org/es/implementation/special-programme). However, it currently has no dolphin conservation issues. This should be reviewed.

5. Open opportunities for bilateral/multilateral cooperation with different countries, taking into consideration the line of action and contextualizing it with the national goals of each part of the CMP. The interest of Italy and Australia was mentioned, as well as other countries that could have resources available in the short term.

Next Steps

- The work plan for the next two years must be reviewed, guaranteeing the resources identified in the CMP proposal approved by the International Whaling Commission. The estimated budget was GBP 200,000, which should cover the Coordinator's fees and the realization of workshops and actions between governments.

- It is proposed to explore the possibility of holding a side event during the IWC Scientific Committee meeting to be held in Slovenia between April 22 and May 7, 2023. In this event it is expected to be able to present the river dolphin CMP in more detail to other countries through their Commissioners.

- An analysis of potential funding sources is proposed, using as a basis the presentation made by the international relations office of the Colombian Ministry of Environment, and adjusting it to the international cooperation agendas of each country.

- The government of Brazil offered to lead the next meeting of the CMP on river dolphins.

- Using the inputs from the workshop, the presentation of the governments of Brazil, Colombia, Ecuador and Peru at the IWC Scientific Committee meeting will be prepared. This presentation will report on progress in the five thematic areas and the 32 actions.