

**XXXIV SCAR Delegates Meeting****Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, 29-30 August 2016**

# **Highlighting the Role of SCAR Groups, Union Members and National Committees**

## **Executive Summary**

**Authors:** Jenny Baeseman and Rosemary Nash

### **Important Issues or Factors:**

The work going on within SCAR groups, Member countries and within the ICSU Union members dealing with better understanding Antarctica is extensive. Yet, it is often difficult to get a quick overview of what groups are doing, where new researchers might be able to get involved, and how countries might better collaborate with each other. This paper describes the activities within SCAR that have been employed to help with communication of groups, as well as presenting some new ideas of things that could be done.

### **Recommendations/Actions and Justification:**

Delegates are asked to provide feedback on the newly suggested activities and to approve the creation of a 1-year ad-hoc group focused on highlighting activities of SCAR groups, Union members and National Committees.

### **Budget Implications:**

We ask for a slight increase in the General Office budget line (\$500 USD) to purchase website extensions, software, etc needed to implement features to highlight activities of SCAR groups, Union members and National Committees.

## **Introduction/Motivation**

The work going on within SCAR groups, member countries and within the ICSU union members dealing with better understanding Antarctica is extensive. Yet, it is often difficult to get a quick overview of what groups are doing, where new researchers might be able to get involved, and how countries might better collaborate with each other. This paper describes the activities within SCAR that have been employed to help with communication of groups, as well as presenting some new ideas of things that could be done.

### **Groups**

SCAR has three Scientific Standing Committees, six Scientific Research Programmes, ~11 Action Groups, ~15 Expert Groups and two Co-sponsored Research Programmes/Projects – all made of up of volunteers working to enhance our understanding of Antarctica. The degree of activity within each group varies, as does their level of communication of activities. The SCAR website should be a main place where this information is found, however many groups have very sparse information and others have many interesting new developments that are buried layers deep and often not seen by website visitors. In addition, many scientists have asked how to get involved with SCAR and are not sure if groups are open and anyone can join or if they are closed, how often they meet, etc. More communication on group activities to the greater SCAR community is needed.

### **Union members**

SCAR has nine ICSU union members. The interaction between SCAR and the unions varies quite substantially – some have strong ties, others have people who want to engage with SCAR but activities have not developed for various reasons. To help share the efforts of ICSU unions with SCAR, we have asked each union member to submit a short update which was to be included in the ICSU Unions paper submitted to Delegates (WP 19). Only two unions provided an update: IUGG and IUBS. Several unions have signed up to be part of the SCAR activities poster session during the OSC (see below for more information). The ICSU review of SCAR, held earlier this year, encourages more engagement between SCAR and the union members.

### **Member Country Reports**

SCAR asks member countries to submit annual reports to share information within the community. Originally these reports were extensive documentation of all Antarctic research activity within a country. Before the arrival of the internet, many found them quite useful, especially when looking for international collaborators. Over the years, the number of reports that were submitted decreased and the format was changed to be mainly a list of contact points for the various disciplines and groups within SCAR from each country, with the additional detailed information on Antarctic research activity within a country being optional. Even with this new, simplified format, many national committees are still not submitting reports. In 2014, we received 14 National Reports (two of which were highlights in just Geosciences). In 2015, ten were received, and to date only one for 2016 was received out of the 39 member countries of SCAR.

This low submission rate signals that something needs to be done about how members report, in order to help increase the flow of information. Some national research institutes produce beautiful, glossy, printed reports in their native language on activities over the past year (for example, Chile's INACH: [http://www.inach.cl/inach/?page\\_id=8680](http://www.inach.cl/inach/?page_id=8680)). If electronic versions of these reports could be sent to the SCAR Secretariat, they could be posted as national reports for those member countries, without being translated (Google can provide a basic translation for those interested) and included in the SCAR Report Series (which will be invigorated in the coming months, see WP 27), should national committees want to highlight national activities.

## **A Few Ideas...**

As a means to help better communicate and increase the awareness of the activities that SCAR groups, unions and national committees are doing amongst the SCAR community and beyond, we have initiated a few new things and propose the following:

### ***SCAR Activities Poster Session at OSC***

For the first time, we will be having a SCAR Poster Session during the OSC. This was designed to give groups an opportunity to present to the SCAR Community their activities, as well as to entice new participation in projects. 45 SCAR groups, member countries, and union members have signed up to be part of this effort. Ideally, we would like to have PDFs of all the posters so we can share them via the SCAR website, etc. Posters made by groups can also be used to help share efforts at other meetings and conferences throughout the world.

### ***Science Features***

From time to time, groups share with the Secretariat a new paper that has been released. We are happy then to share it with the wider SCAR community via the website and social media. We encourage groups to send us information on new publications that have arisen from group activities. More could be done here, such as regular Antarctic Science webinars that are open to the public (or more focused on the science community). The webinars could be recorded and turned into a vodcast (video podcast) series through iTunes, and used as a great resource for educators. A short podcast series could also be developed along the same lines. This could help in the future to feature the science occurring in SCAR groups, countries and union members.

### ***New Online Newsletter***

We are moving to an online newsletter format that will be more integrated with the SCAR website. This will include several new sections, including a 'Get to Know SCAR' section where we will feature various SCAR Committees and groups. A similar section could also be created for national committees and union members to help highlight recent news, or even just provide a general overview of what is happening and what might be coming up. For more information on the newsletter, please see WP 27.

## **Prioritisation and Implementation**

There are many things that can be done to enhance the communication of SCAR groups, union members and national committees. Unfortunately, the Secretariat has limited resources to do most of these very important activities, many of which are linked directly to the newly proposed Strategic Plan. We are therefore asking for an ad-hoc group to help define what activities should be used to help improve communication efforts within SCAR, and to devise an implementation plan that is manageable for the Secretariat, etc. The group would be composed of interested volunteers from national committees, groups and union members, as well as the SCAR community at large, including early-career researchers, and would be chaired by the Executive Director. The group would communicate via email and would meet online and in-person when opportunities arise, if needed. It is expected that the outcomes from the group would be presented to the Executive Committee at their meeting next year.

## **Recommendations/Expected Outcomes**

We ask Delegates to provide feedback on the newly suggested activities and to approve the creation of a one-year ad-hoc group focused on highlighting activities of SCAR groups, union members and national committees.

We ask for a slight increase in the General Office budget line (\$500 USD) to purchase website extensions, software, etc., which would be needed to implement some of the above suggestions and address recommendations from the ad-hoc group.

We ask Delegates to send any additional ideas they have to the Secretariat.