



SCAR Visiting Scholar Scheme Report

by Jerónimo López-Martínez (Spain)



International
Science Council



Presentation at the National Parliament with the president and several members of the Commission on Climate Change and Sustainability.



With some participants in the open session in the Parliament, including a group of law students.



Meeting with the Vice Minister for Multilateral Affairs and Human Rights.



Lecture at the Mexico's National Autonomous University in Mexico City.



Lecture at the Center for Scientific Research and Higher Education of Ensenada (CICESE), Baja California State.



With the AMEA Director and participants in the Meeting on Mexican Antarctic Science held in the Modelo University in Mérida (Yucatán State) and online.

Name of Visiting Scholar

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Host Institution

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Dates of Visit

From 30th October to 12th November 2022

Summary of Visit

My visit to Mexico from 30 October to 12 November 2022, supported by the SCAR Visiting Scholar Scheme, included a series of meetings with scientists, policy makers and students, as well as lectures at different fora in Mexico City, Ensenada (Baja California State) and Mérida (Yucatán State). An ambitious programme of activities was prepared by the Mexican Agency for Antarctic Studies (AMEA) and during the visit I was accompanied by its director, Dr. Pablo Torres Lepe.

Mexico became an Associate Member of SCAR in April 2021, being represented by AMEA by mandate of the Mexican Academy of Sciences. Although there are individuals that have participated in Antarctic research with other countries, Mexico is at the very initial stage of developing a structure to support Antarctic research.

The programme prepared by AMEA for my visit was fully completed. Its main aims included: a) promote and develop the involvement of the Mexican academic and scientific community on Antarctic research, and b) support the AMEA efforts to motivate the interest of the governmental and scientific authorities for developing Mexican Antarctic research and that the country sign the Antarctic Treaty, of which Mexico is not yet a Part.

In Mexico City I gave a lecture at the Advanced Studies and Research Center of the National Polytechnic Institute (CINVESTAD) and another one at the Institute of Geology of the Mexico's National Autonomous University (UNAM), both with in person participants and attenders, and broadcasted in direct to different centers in other cities within Mexico. In the second case was direct transmission to a room of the National Meeting on Geophysics held in the city

of Vallarta and to the centers of the Institute on Marine Sciences and Limnology in different cities. I visited several UNAM laboratories and meet with managers and scientists of the two mentioned institutions.

I had the opportunity of participating and make a presentation in an open colloque at the National Parliament, led by the president and several members of the Commission on Climate Change and Sustainability. I highlighted the importance of Antarctica for the Earth as well as the role of the Antarctic Treaty System. Through the many questions that arise in the colloque I noted great interest on the possible contribution from Mexico.

Always accompanied by the AMEA director, I also participated in a meeting at the Secretariat of Foreign Affairs (of which depends the submission to the Senate of a possible proposal if they decide a change of the country's position about the Antarctic Treaty) with the Vice Minister for Multilateral Affairs and Human Rights, Marta Delgado Peralta, which attended with ten members of her team, including among others Javier Dávila, General Director for Cooperation Policy of the Mexican Agency for International Cooperation for Development (AMEXCID), and Raúl Alvarez Villaseñor, General Director for Projects. The opinion of the AMEA director and myself after the meeting, which took about one and a half hour, was very positive and on it was expressed that the historical position of Mexico about the Antarctic Treaty will be analyzed.

I also visited the Senate, the body responsible for the eventual approval if finally receives from the government a proposal for signing the Antarctic Treaty. There, the AMEA director and I had meetings with two senators from different parties and their teams, obtaining also positive impressions.

We also had a meeting at the Secretariat of Education, Science, Technology and Innovation of Mexico City (SECTEI) with its director, Rosaura Ruiz and her team, to connect AMEA with their networks.

In Ensenada (Baja California State) I maintained meetings with researchers, some of them with previous experience in Antarctica, visited their laboratories and gave two lectures. One of the lectures was mainly oriented to degree students at the Faculty of Marine Sciences of the Autonomus University of Baja California (UABC), and the other one mainly oriented to postgraduate students and researchers at the Center for Scientific Research and Higher Education of Ensenada (CICESE).

In Mérida (Yucatán State) I participated in the Meeting on Mexican Antarctic Science, that AMEA organized combined my visit. Its programme included my lecture of 1 hour followed by 10 presentations online of 15 minutes each one given by Mexican researchers in different places of the country and abroad. The Meeting and its online transmission were coordinated from the Modelo University in Mérida, where many students attended my lecture in person and to the other presentations through the screen.

In the University Anáhuac Mayab in Mérida I gave a lecture to the students of Law and International Relations, which was mainly focused on the Antarctic

Treaty System. It was very well attended and transmitted online. The students asked many questions and showed great interest for this topic.

In addition to the mentioned public lectures and meetings with scientists, policy makers and students, I also participated in a good number of press, radio and TV interviews.

In all my lectures and meetings, I highlighted the importance of Antarctic scientific research and the international coordination, the SCAR role and activities, its Scientific Research Programmes and the existing opportunities for early career scientists.

The visit provided an opportunity for me to have an interesting interaction with AMEA, policy makers and many Mexican enthusiastic scientists. I believe that there is a great potential for future contribution from Mexico to Antarctic research and to the Antarctic Treaty System. I believe also that my visit was very successful and fruitful, and I look forward to it can contribute to foster the participation of Mexico in SCAR and to future developments in Mexico in relation to the Antarctic Treaty.

I would like to thank AMEA and particularly its director, Dr. Pablo Torres Lepe, who led the organization of the meetings, lectures, and interviews program and who made this visit to Mexico a pleasant and enriching experience for me. I would also like to thank SCAR for support through the Visiting Scholar Scheme.

Capacity Building, Education and Outreach Activities

A year before the visit to Mexico, I participated in the 1st Encounter of Mexican Antarctic Researchers, held online on 12th July 2021. In that occasion I gave a lecture and attended the presentations made by different Mexican scientists involved or interested in Antarctic research.

The programme of my visit in October-November 2022 was organized by AMEA, mainly with a capacity building orientation. It allowed a great number of interactions with students and early career researchers, as well as with senior researchers and policy makers. AMEA has appreciated the SCAR support for my visit, which I think has being timely and positive considering the early stage of the country's involvement in Antarctic research and that it is not a signatory of the Antarctic Treaty.

Following the visit, I have received messages from an early career scientist from UNAM (Mexico City) and from a senior researcher from the Center for Scientific Research and Higher Education of Ensenada (CICESE) in Baja California, that I knew during my lectures. They inform me about their progresses in activating its involvement on Antarctic research jointly with foreign colleagues.

The meetings and lectures previously mentioned aimed contribute to the development of the Mexico's Antarctic scientific research, to increase the

participation of the Mexican scientific community in SCAR and to animate the country's involvement in the Antarctic Treaty System.

The transmission online of all the lectures allowed the extension of them to a larger number of persons in different places of the country. The reason to visit also universities and research centers beyond the capital city was facilitate my personal interaction with students and researchers of more institutions.

AMEA organized several interactions with the media in the visited places, including a press conference. This contributed to produce newspaper, radio and TV interviews that allowed to extend the information to a general public.

There were about thirty presences in media related to the activities carried out during the visit. The following links give access to some of them:

- Newspaper article in "Crónica", published in advance to the visit:
<https://www.cronica.com.mx/academia/mexico-ayudar-conservacion-antartida-traves-investigacion-cientifica.html>
- Newspaper article in "El País", edition for Mexico, and Central and South America:
<https://elpais.com/mexico/2022-11-16/por-que-mexico-debe-participar-en-el-tratado-antartico.html>
- Interview in the magazine and website of the Secretariat of Education, Science, Technology and Innovation of Mexico City:
<https://www.sectei.cdmx.gob.mx/comunicacion/nota/la-antartida-con-la-menor-superficie-historica-de-mar-helado>
- Interview in TV UNAM (min 8 – 21) :
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ohGWIB_obek&ab_channel=TVUNAM
- News in "Diario de la Península", Yucatán:
<https://diariodelapeninsula.com/desde-yucatan-se-impulsa-la-adhesion-de-mexico-al-tratado-antartico/>
- Article in LJA-Mexico:
<https://www.lja.mx/2022/11/la-antartida-es-un-laboratorio-natural-para-muchas-ciencias-dr-jeronimo-lopez-martinez/>

Future Plans

I hope to continue being in touch with AMEA and maintain my support to its efforts to develop the future participation of Mexico in Antarctic research and in SCAR. After the visit, I have remained in contact with the AMEA director and with several Mexican researchers. I would like to help in the future to the advances of Mexico related to Antarctica if my contribution is considered beneficial.

The following questions are for SCAR internal use and will not be posted with your report to the SCAR website unless you would like them to be.

What were the highlights of your visit?

- The visit was very successful and fruitful and It was fully completed the ambitious programme of meetings and lectures prepared by AMEA.
- The visit had benefits for the Mexican Agency for Antarctic Studies (AMEA), which acknowledges the support provided by SCAR through the Visiting Scholar Scheme.
- The activities carried out in different universities and research centers have contributed to transmit the importance of Antarctic science and to develop the interest and motivation for Antarctic research in the Mexican scientific community.
- The interactions with students and early career scientists have been very positive and showed their interest about Antarctica.
- The visit has contributed to increase the knowledge about SCAR among the Mexican scientific community.
- I believe the contacts maintained with policy makers have been very positive for a possible future approach of Mexico to sign the Antarctic Treaty.

What things could have been better?

The programme of activities during the visit was very complete and well organized by AMEA. The only difficulties during the visit were responsibility of the air companies, not of the local organizers, and were due to the cancelation and delays in several internal flights. These conducted to late minute changes of plans and to the need of buying new air tickets with different companies.

How did the SCAR Visiting Scholar Award impact your research? your career objectives? you personally?

This visit to Mexico has been an enriching experience for me. The activities carried out in so many universities and research centers, the Parliament, the Senate and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, jointly with the contacts maintained with Mexican researchers, policy makers and students, have given to me a quite complete perspective of the reality and circumstances of Antarctic research in Mexico and also of the country situation regarding the Antarctic Treaty.

We often like to use quotes from these reports in advertising the programme. Do you have a specific quote you would like us to use?

The Mexican scientific community has capabilities and motivation to develop its participation in SCAR. A future increase of Mexico's involvement will contribute to reinforce Antarctic research and the Antarctic Treaty System.

This visit to Mexico has reinforced my opinion about the interest of maintaining the SCAR Visiting Scholar Scheme and the convenience that its main focus continues being activities in benefit of SCAR countries in early stages of development of their Antarctic research.

We are always looking to improve SCAR's activities. Are there suggestions you have that we could do to help make this programme more effective?

I think this programme is particularly beneficial for SCAR member countries that are in very initial stages of involvement in Antarctic research. I would recommend maintaining a preferential focus in this aim. The results of the visit will be more effective if previously to the visit the local organizers, like has been this case, make a good job preparing the programme of meetings, interviews and activities that are going to be carried out.

Other comments:

I would like to thank AMEA and particularly its director, Dr. Pablo Torres Lepe, who led the organization of the meetings, lectures, and interviews programme. They have contributed very much to make this visit to Mexico an enjoyable and enriching experience for me. I would also like to thank SCAR for support through the Visiting Scholar Scheme.