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Other Policy-Related Activities

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Summary

This report details SCAR's involvement in policy related activities that are not coordinated by SC-ATS. These includes interactions with the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and COP meetings, and the Polar Initiative funded by the Prince Albert II Foundation. This report also provides an update on SCAR's hosting of the Antarctic Environments Portal.

Recommendations

- ExCom to consider how best to coordinate SCAR's engagement with international policy bodies (outside the ATS) and whether a formal lead should be nominated.
- ExCom to advise on whether and how to progress the discussion on SCAR applying for Observer status within the IPCC.

UNFCCC and COP

SCAR co-organised several side events at the UNFCCC COP27 meeting in Egypt, including an official event on “*Slow Onset, Irreversible Impacts Beyond Adaptation: Global Stocktake, Implementation and 1.5° Ambition*” and five events at the International Cryosphere Climate Initiative’s (ICCI) Cryosphere Pavilion.

At the SB58 meetings in Bonn, June 2023, SCAR co-organised a side event titled “*Loss of Mountain Water Resources and Sea-level Rise: Why 2°C is Too High for 3.5 Billion*”.

SCAR has applied as a co-organiser with ICCI and others for an official side event titled “*Adaptation with Loss and Damage: Facing Sea-level Rise and Mountain Freshwater Losses Above 1.5°C*” for the COP28 meeting and is working closely with ICCI to participate at the Cryosphere Pavilion.

Links with other International Bodies

IPCC

The possibility of SCAR seeking observer status within the IPCC was flagged to the Delegates meeting in 2022.¹ It was highlighted that SCAR scientists play a significant role in the work of the IPCC at an individual level and have made significant contributions to IPCC reports, but SCAR as an organisation does not have formal links. It has been suggested by several members of the SCAR community that SCAR could seek observer status within the IPCC. This could further enhance opportunities to facilitate uptake of Antarctic research within the IPCC process and would enable SCAR to comment on reports and send dedicated representatives to sessions of the IPCC if it so wished. Observer status would need to be applied for via a process managed by the IPCC secretariat. The application process is straightforward, and would involve sending by post a letter of application with copies of:

- a) documents describing SCAR’s mandate, scope and governing structure of the organization, such as the charter/statutes/constitution/by-laws or articles of association,
- b) evidence of SCAR’s non-profit and/or tax-exempt status,
- c) any other information that supports SCAR’s competence in matters related to the IPCC,
- d) information on the affiliation with other non-governmental organizations or institutions involved in climate change activities as appropriate,
- e) contact information of the organization and of a designated focal point.

The IPCC website states that new requests for admission as an observer to Sessions of the IPCC and any of its Working Groups must be submitted at least 4 months before a Session of the Panel or a Working Group.

Polar Initiative (Prince Albert II Foundation)

Following the first award of the Prince Albert II of Monaco Fellowship in early 2023 as part of the Initiative, the recipient has been invited to join the Foundation at the 16th edition of their Planetary Health Awards Ceremony, in Philadelphia, November 2023.

The second Fellowship award under the Initiative is expected as part of the 2023 SCAR Fellowship cohort.

Dialogue is continuing with the Foundation (and IASC) on the planning for the second Symposium under the Initiative, currently scheduled for February 2024.

Antarctic Environments Portal

Since the XXXVII SCAR Delegates' Meeting, the Portal has published four new Information Summaries. These Information Summaries cover the warming of the Southern Ocean and its significance, Antarctic krill and its fishery: current status and challenges, the recovery of Antarctica's giants – baleen whales, and terrestrial non-native species in Antarctica: introduction, impact and management response. Additionally, three new infographics have been created to reinforce the key messages of the Information Summaries. These infographics will soon be available for viewing and download on the Portal website.

[IP075 Antarctic Environments Portal](#) was presented to CEP XXV and was well received. The Committee 'thanked SCAR for its valuable work in managing the Portal and encouraged it to continue the good work. It noted that there had been several references to the Portal throughout the Committee's discussions and it encouraged Members to continue to support the Portal, including through financial contributions when possible.'ⁱⁱ

Information on the Portal was also well received within ATCM XLV. The meeting 'thanked SCAR for its report, recalling the importance of SCAR's role in providing objective and independent advice, and thanked SCAR for the ongoing hosting and management of the Antarctic Environments Portal'.ⁱⁱⁱ SCAR highlighted the Portal's information summaries on Sea Ice in the context of discussions that took place about recent rapid and significant changes to Antarctic Sea Ice. Members also noted that the SCAR Antarctic Environments Portal could be a useful platform for the dissemination of reports on the State of the Antarctic Environment.

Statistics on Uptake

The Portal utilises multiple communications platforms: the Portal mailing list (199 subscribers), a Facebook page (1,126 subscribers) and the SCAR X channel (9,986 followers). The Portal website is visited by around 730 users per month on average, with the top three users coming from the US (1,400 users/year), Australia (933 users) and the UK (637 users).

Organisational / Financial Developments

The Portal Management Board composition has not changed since the SCAR Delegates meeting. It comprises the SCAR Executive Director, SCAR Vice President for Science, the SC-ATS Chief Officer and the former Chair of the Management Board, Assoc. Prof. Daniela Liggett. The Board meets quarterly to discuss ongoing business and priorities for the Portal with input from the Portal Editor Keith Reid and the Assistant Editor Johanna Grabow. It is likely that a new Portal Editor will need to be appointed during 2024 as Keith Reid has indicated he is likely to step down during 2024, although the exact date is not yet known.

The Portal Management Board is working on a first draft of a business plan to present to the SCAR Delegates at the 2024 meeting which will present diverse funding options to support SCAR's hosting of the Portal over the longer term, for Delegates' consideration. It is likely that SCAR will need to consider providing a proportion of the funds that are required to run the Portal over the longer term (at least 40-50% is recommended) to ensure continuity and stability. With this in mind, a sum of 10,000 USD from SCAR's own funds has been included in the draft budget for 2025. This topic will be discussed under Agenda item 10 on Finance.

The Portal costs between 25,000-30,000 USD per annum to run. Of the funds received since the Portal was first transferred to SCAR (from Australia, New Zealand, the UK and the Netherlands) around 4200 USD remains. In addition, Korea and Turkiye have offered further

support in 2023. With these contributions, SCAR should have sufficient funds to continue to run the Portal until the 2024 Delegates meeting, although expenditure will need to be closely monitored to stay within budget. At Delegates meeting, decisions will be made about the longer term financing of the Portal. SCAR is very grateful to all countries who have supported its hosting of the Portal to date.

Future Plans

Detailed future plans have been outlined under each individual heading of this report.

Key priorities for the coming year include:

- Continuation of plans for an official side event at COP28.
- The planning of a second symposium for the Polar Initiative in February 2024.
- Progression of discussions on the possibility of SCAR observer status within the IPCC subject to ExCom approval/guidance.
- Completion of a business plan for the Antarctic Environments Portal.

ⁱ <https://www.scar.org/excom-meetings/xxxvii-scar-delegates-2022-go-a-india-1/5835-37-p25/>

ⁱⁱ Final report of CEP XXV, paragraph 213,

ⁱⁱⁱ Final report of ATCM XLV, paragraph 34, 169, 185