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XXXVII SCAR Delegates Meeting

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ATS report to the SCAR Delegates Meeting: main outputs from ATCM XLIV (Berlin, 2022)

Report Author(s)

Antarctic Treaty Secretariat

Summary of activities up to September 2022 and any other important matters

The Antarctic Treaty Consultative Meeting (ATCM) XLIV and the Meeting of the Committee for Environmental Protection (CEP) XXIV took place in Berlin, Federal Republic of Germany, from 23 May to 2 June, 2022. It was the first in-person ATCM and CEP Meeting since 2019.

This report includes information on the main outputs stemmed from ATCM XLIV and the Meeting of the CEP XXIV, relating to the work and interests of SCAR and its Members.

Main outputs from the CEP

Item 7: Climate Change Implications for the Environment

It includes information on agenda points 7a) Strategic Approach and 7b) Climate Change Implications for the Environment: Implementation and Review of the Climate Change Response Work Programme (CCRWP) (see para 30-39 and 44 to 51, CEP XXIV Final Report)

The ACCE Report

On issues related to the Strategic Approach to Climate Change, and after the presentation of SCAR's WP 30, WP31 and IP 72, which referred to the *Decadal Synopsis of the Antarctic Climate Change and the Environment Report* (the ACCE Report), the Committee emphasised the value of being provided with high-quality science syntheses as a basis for its work and noted the broad support expressed for the recommendations therein included.

The Committee also expressed its appreciation for the excellent SCAR's lecture on the outcomes of the ACCE report and congratulated SCAR on its milestone decadal update, recognising it as a valuable contribution for further deliberations on climate change implications and other management discussions and the relevance of the findings for the work of the Subsidiary Group on Climate Change Response and for its Work Programme. The Committee noted that the update underscored the urgency to conduct further research to fill science gaps and to implement response actions.

The Committee raised several points for further consideration including the need:

- to maintain an intersessional dialogue between SCAR and the SGCCR to enhance a deeper debate during the next CEP;
- to addressing science gaps and uncertainties and
- for systematic long-term monitoring

Finally, the Committee highlighted the importance of communicating and disseminating the findings of this report to the wider global community.

The Subsidiary Group on Climate Change Response

The Committee updated Terms of Reference for the Subsidiary Group on Climate Change Response, which was tasked to, inter alia, keep the CCRWP under regular review, with the input of SCAR and COMNAP on scientific and practical matters, respectively; and give consideration, within Members' national scientific funding systems and national Antarctic research programmes, as to how they could address the research needs and actions identified in the CCRWP.

On its advice to the ATCM on the implementation of the Climate Change Response Work Programme (CCRWP), the Committee stressed it had delivered or initiated work on almost all of the 34 Actions identified within the CCRWP. Among them, the CEP referred to:

- Support and undertake research to improve understanding of current and future change and to inform response: The SCAR Decadal Update to the Antarctic Climate Change and the Environment Report and IP 81 Mapping SCAR affiliated research to climate change related science needs identified by the CEP).
- Consider forthcoming SCAR report on ocean acidification and act accordingly: ATCM XLIII – WP 36 and CEP XXIII Report, para. 211-217.

The Committee also acknowledged the work of SCAR and other Observers in the work of the SGCCR.

Item 8: Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA)

It includes information on agenda point 8b) Other EIA Matters (see para 66-72, CEP XXIV Final Report)

EIA in Antarctica

After the presentation of WP 33 *Report on Effectiveness of Environmental Impact Assessment in Antarctica* (United Kingdom and the Netherlands), which summarised the findings of an independent assessment of the effectiveness of EIA in Antarctica, the Committee agreed to progress this issue through informal discussion during the intersessional period.

SCAR indicated its willingness to contribute on several of the issues identified in the EIA assessment report, such as engaging the SCAR humanities and social sciences group (SC-HASS) and the Ant-ICON programme to contribute to work on assessing impacts on Antarctic values; providing advice on conducting baseline surveys; and developing emission and environmental quality standards.

Item 10: Conservation of Antarctic Flora and Fauna

It includes information on agenda point 10b) Specially Protected Species and 10c) Other Annex II Matters (see para 179-188 and 203-204, CEP XXIV Final Report)

Emperor Penguin status

The results of discussions maintained within a CEP Intersessional Contact Group established to develop a Specially Protected Species Action Plan for the emperor penguin were presented in WP34 (United Kingdom). The ICG was established after a recommendation of SCAR, which had suggested that the species might best be classified within the IUCN Red List as 'Vulnerable'. The ICG proposed the CEP recommend to the ATCM the designation of the emperor penguin as a Specially Protected Species under Annex II to the Protocol.

During the debates, the Committee emphasised the importance of drawing on best available science to support CEP management decisions such as listing specially protected species, and noted SCAR's advice on the need for the conservation of the emperor penguin. Members also noted that the Committee had sufficient scientific knowledge available to demonstrate the vulnerability of the emperor penguin to climate change, including as highlighted in the SCAR Lecture on the ACCE Report.

They emphasised that there was no prerequisite for a species to be listed in the IUCN Red List as Vulnerable or higher before it could be considered for SPS designation, and that the provisions of Annex II and current SPS Guidelines had been followed in basing the recommendations for designation on SCAR's assessment of conservation status.

The Committee did not reach consensus on that recommendation in WP 34 despite receiving full support from all but one Member. Members expressed an intent to return to the recommendations presented in WP 34 at CEP XXV, and urged all Members to engage in intersessional discussions to work towards consensus.

Studies on Adelie penguins

Following presentation of IP 122 *Group-size effect on vigilance and flight initiation distances of Adélie penguins in south-eastern Antarctica*, by China, which reported on research conducted on Vigilance and Flight Initiation Distances of Adélie penguins to potential disturbances from human activities, SCAR indicated that it would report any relevant information to the CEP for future consideration.

Item 11: Environmental Monitoring and Reporting

(see para 207-222, CEP XXIV Final Report)

Antarctic Environmental Portal

Following SCAR's WP 10 Antarctic Environments Portal, which noted that the Portal was an online independent source that supported the work of the CEP by providing impartial and up-to-date information based on the best available science, the Committee highlighted that the Portal's Information Summaries provided a high-quality source for policymakers to support decision making, reiterated its continued support for it and encouraged SCAR to continue its efforts in providing this highly relevant scientific data for Members' consideration.

Sample data collection of environmental contamination

On the presentation of WP 11 rev.1 Further steps towards a structured sample data collection of environmental contamination (and related IP 7 rev. 1 Update on current initiatives for a more structured sample and data collection of environmental contamination in the Antarctic), prepared by Germany, Australia, Italy, Sweden, United Kingdom and United States, the CEP acknowledged the value of enhancing collective efforts towards the development of a structured sample database of environmental contamination in Antarctica, and recognised SCAR's valuable contribution with respect to sampling data and long-term monitoring of Antarctic contaminants.

The Committee requested SCAR to submit recommendations to CEP XXV on how a more systematic sampling and data collection of chemical contamination in the Antarctic could be delivered, and encouraged Members to intensify cooperation between all stakeholders to initiate a more structured sample and data collection of environmental contamination in the Antarctic.

SCAR recalled its CEP XXIII - IP 137 *Persistent Organic Chemicals in Antarctica: A horizon scan of priority challenges* and drew Members' attention to the work of its ImPACT Action group on persistent organic pollutants. Likewise, SCAR expressed support for the papers' recommendations, and agreed to provide advice to CEP XXV, as requested. The Committee thanked SCAR for its offer to provide advice on this matter and looked forward to progressing this work at CEP XXV.

Monitoring Antarctic Tourism

Finally, on the debates following WP 22 *Towards adaptive and sustainable management of Antarctic tourism: Monitoring as a key tool for decision-making* (Spain, Ecuador and the United States), which recommended that the CEP promote the establishment of monitoring programmes to assess the actual impacts arising from tourism activities, continue with its work to understand the cumulative impacts of tourism on the environment; and ensure that monitoring programs involve multiple stakeholders, the Committee recalled its Five-year Work Plan and its request for advice from SCAR on the design of an environmental monitoring programme to assess the impacts of tourism.

SCAR agreed on the need to provide further monitoring data to support decision-making on Antarctic tourism and underlined that an overarching strategy to coordinate and facilitate research was required. SCAR drew the meeting's attention to its recently-formed Antarctic Tourism Action Group (Ant-TAG), which aimed to facilitate research collaboration within SCAR on topics related to tourism, and highlighted that SCAR experts were ready to contribute their evidence-based advice as required.

The Committee highlighted the importance of developing programmes to assess impacts arising from tourism activities, and encouraged Members and Observers to work together to progress this work.

Item 13: General Matters

(see para 238-243, CEP XXIV Final Report)

Communicating CEP science needs to researchers and national science funding agencies

Following the introduction of WP 21 Communication of CEP science needs to researchers and national science funding agencies, prepared by Norway and the United Kingdom, which recommended that the Committee initiate a process to consider how the list of CEP science needs for Antarctic management, in the CEP Five-year Work Plan, could be further developed to clarify research needs in a way that could be more easily understood and actioned by researchers and funding agencies, The Committee noted that that this issue was relevant to all Members, especially those Members whose funding agencies and national Antarctic programmes were not closely linked.

The Committee discussed a number of opportunities for communicating CEP science needs to the research community in the future and agreed to initiate a process to consider how the list of CEP science needs for Antarctic management in the CEP Five-Year Work Plan can be further developed to clarify research needs. It also agreed to advise the ATCM that Parties should ensure that CEP science needs are regularly communicated to national science funding agencies with the aim of supporting timely delivery of science to inform CEP advice to the ATCM.

SCAR agreed that strengthening dialogue between the CEP and national science funding agencies would be valuable and noted that the creation of a list of science needs provided a good foundation for this. SCAR also expressed its interest in contributing to efforts to clarify research needs that were both accessible to and actionable by researchers and national science funding agencies.

Outputs from the ATCM

Item 10: Exchange of Information

(see para 162-169, ATCM XLIV Final Report)

Scientific information exchanged among Parties: Ongoing review

Under this item, WP 9 *Review of the scientific information contained in the EIES* was presented by Spain. It recalled that scientific information exchanged between Parties was gradually decreasing, and suggested that a review be conducted on the scientific information sent to the Electronic Information Exchange System (EIES).

The Meeting underscored that the exchange of information was a cornerstone of the Antarctic Treaty System and highlighted that scientific data and information was already shared through a number of other national and international repositories such as the Antarctic Metadata Directory (AMD) managed by SCAR. The Meeting agreed that future work should aim to simplify information sharing and ensure interoperability between different systems.

SCAR reminded the Meeting of its Standing Committee on Antarctic Data Management (SCADM), which facilitated co-operation between scientists and Parties with regard to scientific data, and noted that data was only useful if it was Findable, Accessible, Interoperable, and Reusable (the FAIR principle).

The Meeting agreed to establish an ICG to discuss and exchange ideas on Scientific

Information in the EIES. The ICG will discuss a number of issues including, among others, the advisability of reporting on the existence of international scientific cooperation among the Parties and of generating new summarised reports and thematic maps on scientific research in Antarctica. Observers and Experts participating in the ATCM were invited to provide input and Spain would act as convener and report to the next ATCM on the progress made in the ICG.

SCAR also welcomed the invitation to participate. The Executive Secretary noted that, to avoid redundancy and duplication with other existing efforts, the Secretariat would collaborate with SCAR.

Item 15: Science Issues, Scientific Cooperation and Facilitation

Science issues and future science challenges

(see para 231-246 ATCM XLIV Final Report)

Several Parties, Observers and Experts presented updates and futures plans of ongoing scientific projects and initiatives with potential for international cooperation. SCAR Delegates are invited to explore this section of the ATCM Final Report to seek for detailed information on such Antarctic research activities.

Key Science Priorities of National Antarctic Programs

(see para 252, ATCM XLIV Final Report)

The Secretariat reminded Parties that, in response to a request made at the ATCM XLII (ATCM XLII final report, para 311) it had created a section on its website to highlight the key science priorities of national Antarctic programmes so as to make these easily accessible to all Parties. The Meeting encouraged Parties that have not yet done so, to provide information to the Secretariat to display on the website.

Diversity issues in Antarctic science

(see para 255-259 ATCM XLIV Final Report)

The Meeting approached issues associated to diversity, equality and inclusion in Antarctic science. Two Parties presented papers on their activities and initiatives on these issues. During ATCM XLIV (Berlin, 2022), the Meeting recognised the increasing international interest in factors related to intersectionality and diversity and expressed a firm commitment to Diversity and its desire to ensure that everyone working on Antarctic matters is safe, welcomed, respected and free from discrimination. These issues were included as a priority issue in the ATCM Multiyear Strategic Work Plan, with the goal of promoting full participation of underrepresented groups in Antarctic science and operations activities. Parties, Observers and Experts are to share information on their plans on these issues through 2023 and 2025.

Item 16: Implications of Climate Change for Management of the Antarctic Treaty Area

(see para 260-278, ATCM XLIV Final Report)

The ACCE Report

The XLIV ATCM (Berlin, 2022) adopted Resolution 4 (2022) *Antarctic Climate Change and the Environment: A Decadal Synopsis and Recommendations for Action*, which was based on the presentation of SCAR's WP 30, WP31 and IP 72. These documents referred to the *Decadal Synopsis of the Antarctic Climate Change and the Environment Report (the ACCE Report)* and included findings, policy

recommendations and research imperatives on Climate Change in Antarctica.

The Resolution recommends the dissemination of the ACCE report to departments and agencies charged with climate change negotiations, to Antarctic science and research bodies and funding agencies, and to the general public and media. The Meeting also continued to welcome updates from SCAR on climate change and its implications.

The Meeting also agreed to continue to support SCAR in the communication of the latest research and information on climate change and its impacts, and to also support national Antarctic programmes in this endeavour.

Likewise, the Meeting adopted Decision 4 (2022) *Letters on Antarctic Climate Change and the Environment: A Decadal Synopsis and Recommendations for Action* report to send letters to the UNFCCC, IPCC, WMO, IPBES and IMO forwarding SCAR's Decadal Synopsis

The Meeting also agreed to hold a full-day joint session of the CEP and the ATCM, with SCAR and COMNAP, to consider the implementation of the ACCE recommendations at ATCM XLV (Helsinki, 2023). The Meeting encouraged Parties, Observers and Experts to submit papers on the topic to ATCM XLV, and to bring experts to the meeting to support this work.

Other issues

The SCAR Lecture

(see para 348, ATCM XLIV Final Report)

In preparation of ATCM XLV (Helsinki, 2023) and taking into account the valuable series of lectures given by SCAR at a number of ATCMs, the Meeting decided to invite SCAR to present another lecture on scientific issues relevant to ATCM XLV.

Recommendations

None