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## SCAR Executive Committee (EXCOM) Meeting Trieste, Italy, 15-16 September 2023



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## SCAR Executive Committee Meeting

Trieste, Italy  
15 – 16 September 2023

### Attendees:

Yeadong Kim (President), Jefferson Simões, (Vice-President for Finance), Deneb Karentz (Vice-President for Science), Marcelo Leppe (Vice-President for Administration), Chandrika Nath (SCAR Executive Director), Eoghan Griffin (SCAR Executive Officer), Johanna Grabow (SCAR Project Officer), Jesús Galindo (Chief Officer, GeoSciences), Takuji Nakamura (Chief Officer, Physical Science Group), Wojciech Miloch (Secretary, Physical Science Group), Daniela Liggett (Chief Officer, Ant-ICON), Tim Naish (Co-Chair INSTANT), Florence Colleoni (Chief Officer, INSTANT), Frank Nitsche (Deputy Officer, SC-ADM), Kenichi Matsuoka (Bedmap3 and Chair, RINGS), Jim Madsen (Chief Officer, AAA), Lucilla Alfonsi (Lead, AGATA Planning Group), and Sebin Lee (President's Assistant) attended in person.

Ian McDonald (Chief Officer, Life Sciences), Adriana Gulisano (EDI; Deputy Chief Officer, Physical Sciences), Burcu Özsoy (Vice-President, CBET), Susie Grant (Chief Officer, SC-ATS), Peder Roberts (Chief Officer, SC-HASS), Li Fei (Co-Chief Officer, SC-AGI), Louise Ireland (Co-Chief Officer, SC-AGI), Tom Bracegirdle (Co-Chief Officer, AntClim<sup>Now</sup>), and Alyce Hancock (Executive Officer, SOOS) attended online.

### Apologies:

Peter Fretwell (Chair, Bedmap3) and Byron Adams (Secretary, Life Sciences) sent their apologies.

Meeting papers are held in the SCAR Library and may be accessed at [here](#).

## 1. Opening Business

### 1.1 Welcome and goals

The SCAR President, Yeadong Kim, welcomed the attendees and opened the meeting. Apologies were noted from those unable to attend and their contributions were noted. The President noted that the focus of the meeting would be on future plans and developments, as well as reflecting on SCAR's progress since the last meeting.

### 1.2 Arrangements for the meeting

The timetable and agenda for the meeting were adopted.

## 2. Science

### 2.1 Science Group Reports

#### Geosciences Group (GSG)

The meeting noted the report submitted for this agenda item from the GeoSciences Group ([Link to Paper](#)). Jesús Galindo, the Chief Officer (CO), presented an overview of GSG activities and highlighted that most activities have now been resumed following the pandemic. An online meeting was held in July with all the GeoSciences Science Research Groups (SRPs) and Programme Planning Groups (PPGs) in which the groups reported on and updated their activities. The successful start of the GEOCON Expert Group and the ICEPRO Action Group activities was noted.

A proposal for a new PPG/SRP regarding Antarctic Geological Evolution (AGE) is being planned by Connecting Geophysics and Geology (CGG). Questions were asked by group leaders about potential overlap with INSTabilities & Thresholds in ANTarctica (INSTANT) and about the potential relevance of this group to wider stakeholders. It was also suggested that this group could look into possible links with the Antarctic Geospace and ATmosphere reseArch (AGATA) PPG.

**Action: AGE to reach out to the GeoSciences community and other relevant SCAR groups in preparation of their proposal for a new PPG.**

#### Life Sciences Group (LSG)

The meeting noted the report submitted for this agenda item from the Life Sciences Group ([Link to Paper](#)).

Ian McDonald, the Chief Officer, presented an overview of LSG activities which included the resounding success of the 2023 SCAR Biology Conference, the satisfactory continuation of all group activities, the publication of scientific research papers, and the currently highly-relevant work of the Expert Group on Birds and Marine Mammals (EG-BAMM) which has been carrying out significant work on the threat of avian influenza in Antarctica and has developed a risk assessment document.

**Action: EG-BAMM developed a risk assessment document regarding avian influenza in Antarctica which should be distributed by the SCAR Secretariat. (status – resolved)**

#### Physical Sciences Group (PSG)

The meeting noted the report submitted for this agenda item from the Physical Sciences Group ([Link to Paper](#)).

The Chief Officer, Takuji Nakamura, presented the report for PSG, emphasising the diversity of action and expert groups within the PSG, the successful in-person meetings which have taken place this year, their on-going research activities, and the active inclusion of Early Career Researchers (ECRs) into PSG activities. The report covered each action and expert group in detail, explaining their past activities, future plans, budgets, and Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) efforts.

#### General Discussion:

##### *Assessing sub-group activities*

There was a discussion, led by Vice President for Science, Deneb Karentz, on the actions to be taken if sub-groups did not or could not submit a yearly report on their

activities and budget use. A grace period for sub-groups behind on their reporting was suggested, in order for them to either complete a report or communicate their needs to SCAR, with funding stopped only if no action was taken. Another suggestion was to put a group 'on pause' until it was in a position to resume activities, though it was pointed out that, if group activities had halted because of lack of leadership, there could be other group members available to take on the role. It was generally agreed that the COVID-19 pandemic can no longer be used as a reason for a group's inactivity.

The evaluation of all sub-groups was also discussed. A suggestion was that subgroups should be evaluated against their own proposals for the original formation of their group.

A new ('Group of the Month') section was suggested for the monthly newsletter, showcasing the activities of an Expert or Action Group, to raise awareness of sub-group activities. All sub-groups should have a mandatory presence on the SCAR website.

Group leaders reported that the online reporting system for sub-groups was seen as a positive step. The introduction of a 'Transition plans' category into the online reporting system was suggested, notably for groups coming to the end of their activities. This would enable groups to explain how they plan on wrapping up their activities and whether they have any plans to continue their activities in a different format.

**Decision: Subsidiary groups to be evaluated on a regular basis by comparing their past and current activities to the proposal made when the group was formed.**

**Decision: Submission of an annual report is the minimum requirement for a group to be considered as active.**

**Action: Secretariat to include a new section in the SCAR monthly newsletter promoting a 'Group of the Month'.**

**Action: Secretariat to add a 'Transition plans' category to the sub-group online reporting system.**

### ***Proposed Fellowship Programme***

The new science group fellowship programme, which will provide ECRs with an opportunity to support the work of the Science Groups (SGs) and in return receive mentorship and an understanding of how SCAR operates, was discussed. It is hoped that this will in turn contribute to the creation of a pool of future SCAR group members and leaders.

While the application form would be universal, each individual group would be responsible for selecting the final candidate. It was suggested that an interview be conducted as the last round of the selection process with the involvement of non-Science Group representatives. The question of how inclusive this programme should be was also discussed. ECRs encompass a large range of people and it is necessary to determine who is considered an ECR for the purpose of this scheme in conjunction with the aims of this programme for the SGs.

The funding for this programme would be a one-time allocation for a two-year pilot programme before determining whether the programme should become permanent.

**Decision: Mid-career scientists will be included in those eligible to apply for the Science Group Fellowship Programme.**

**Action: CBET, VP for Science and Science groups to work together to refine the new fellowship scheme including the goals of the scheme and the criteria for acceptance. (status – resolved)**

## **2.2 Scientific Research Programme (SRP) Reports**

### **Integrated Science to Inform Antarctic and Southern Ocean Conservation (Ant-ICON)**

The meeting noted the report submitted for this agenda item from Ant-ICON ([Link to Paper](#)). The Chief Officer, Daniela Liggett, presented the report for Ant-ICON and highlighted the group's achievements and future plans. At the 2022 SCAR Open Science Conference (OSC), a mini-symposium on science to policy communication was successfully held, with plans for a follow-up symposium at the 2024 SCAR OSC. An in-person workshop was held in September 2022, and an online workshop in October of the same year. Ant-ICON was also present at the Standing Committee on Humanities and Social Sciences (SC-HASS) biennial conference in June 2023, where it ran a roundtable on Antarctic conservation, and at the SCAR Biology Symposium in August 2023. The Standing Committee on the Antarctic Treaty System (SC-ATS)/Ant-ICON Fellow contributed WP18 Contribution of information to inform State of the Antarctic Environment Reporting (SAER): a potential new SCAR initiative to the 2023 SCAR ATCM.

Concerns and challenges for Ant-ICON were also discussed. The CO said that the SCAR Secretariat is crucial to the working of SCAR groups but is under-resourced, and that there needs to be a discussion on how SCAR as a community can make sure there is more administrative support within the Secretariat to support SCAR groups, as much of the groups' tasks are administrative. The question of sustainable capacity building and recruitment was also discussed. It was suggested that a Partnerships Manager type role at the Secretariat could relieve some of the administrative burden on the groups. The question of how to recognise the work of individuals other than through the SCAR medals, which primarily recognise late career researchers and have in the past tended to be gender and geographically biased, was also put forward by the CO.

The CO highlighted challenges to working in an interdisciplinary group such as difficulties obtaining funding for interdisciplinary projects and publishing interdisciplinary work. She also highlighted current challenges at the science-policy interface due to the increasing politicization of science.

### **INStabilities and Thresholds in ANTArctica (INSTANT)**

The meeting noted the report submitted for this agenda item by INSTANT ([Link to Paper](#)). Chief Officer, Tim Naish, presented the report and highlighted the success of the first INSTANT Conference in 2023. He highlighted that INSTANT contributed to WP042 'SCAR updates on Antarctic Climate Change and the Environment' submitted to XLV ATCM in Helsinki, which was the update to the 2022 'Antarctic Climate Change and the Environment: A Decadal Synopsis and Recommendations for Action' ACCE report. He also highlighted plans to produce sea level projection mapping of Antarctica (notably of protected areas, areas of interest for biodiversity, and areas with infrastructure) which would be endorsed by both SCAR and the Council of Managers of National Antarctic Programs (COMNAP). This project would help Parties further understand the impact of sea level rise on Antarctica. He also highlighted the various benefits of INSTANT involvement in side events at recent Conference of the Parties (COP) meetings such as extending networks and raising the profile of cryosphere related issues.

The CO highlighted that as mentioned by Daniela Liggett for Ant-ICON, there is a need for extra support and capacity for research groups and strategic research groups. He raised the possibility of creating a support office for SRPs. He used the model of the World Climate Research Programme (WCRP) as an example of how such support could be offered to SCAR groups, and suggested that rather than an entire office,

another option could be a single person employed within the SCAR Secretariat, dedicated to supporting SRPs. He also suggested joint funding of such support, with other international organisations.

### Near-term Variability and Prediction of the Antarctic Climate System (AntClim<sup>Now</sup>)

The meeting noted the report submitted for this agenda item by AntClim<sup>Now</sup> ([Link to Paper](#)). Chief Officer, Tom Bracegirdle, presented the report on behalf of AntClim<sup>Now</sup>. Activities undertaken by this SRP, such as the AntClim<sup>Now</sup> monthly science talks and organisation of scientific workshops, were noted. AntClim<sup>Now</sup> has supported a diverse range of projects, most notably the organisation of Antarctic-focused sessions at several international conferences. The online workshop 'Toward an Antarctic Radiation Regional Network (ARRN)' in July 2023 had as a final goal the creation of an Antarctic Radiation Regional Network which could apply to become a SCAR Action Group in the future.

AntClim<sup>Now</sup> is developing Antarctic Climate Indicators as a central place that jointly displays or documents iconic climate variables relevant to Antarctica and the Southern Ocean. It would join other similar climate indicators such as those provided by the World Meteorological Organisation (WMO), WCRP or the UK Met Office. It is envisaged that these indicators would need to be monitored regularly in order to provide up to date data. Several group members suggested that if INSTANT is creating these indicators, they could consider creating 'Antarctic Report Cards' similar to the already existing 'Arctic Report Cards' which have proven to be very useful in international settings, working in conjunction with other SCAR groups.

The CO highlighted that long-distance travel for meetings and conferences was as a key challenge for the group. The possibility of regional hubs was suggested for certain meetings.

**Action: SRP Chief Officers (INSTANT, AntClim<sup>Now</sup>) to discuss the possibility of working together with other relevant groups to create 'Antarctic Report Cards' to be used at international meetings (COPs, ATCMs).**

### General discussion: The funding of SRPs

The general discussion focused on funding of SRPs and endorsement processes.

Group leaders reiterated that the workload involved in administration of the SRPs was considerable and could be better supported either through a programme office dedicated to the SRP or through dedicated support either within the SCAR Secretariat or through a partner organisation. However, members of the Executive Committee (ExCom) pointed out that SCAR was not set up to support programme offices for individual SRPs and there needed to be further discussion around SCAR's expectations of what SRPs should deliver, and the role of external support in this.

Some group members queried whether the funds allocated to the proposed Science Group Fellowships could be better spent on additional capacity at the Secretariat, if their aim was simply to fill an administrative gap for the SRPs. However, others pointed out that the aim of the fellowships is to mentor and build capacity rather than just fill an administrative gap.

Endorsement of projects by SRPs was discussed. All SRP leaders agreed that it was important for SRPs to be able to endorse projects, but it was agreed that a strategic and cautious approach was needed and that central guidance from SCAR would be beneficial.

### **2.3 Antarctic Geospace and ATmosphere reseArch (AGATA) PPG**

The meeting noted the report submitted for this agenda item by AGATA ([Link to Paper](#)). Chief Officer, Lucilla Alfonsi, presented an update on the AGATA PPG, covering the programme rationale, the opportunities for cross-over, progress on the science implementation plan, capacity building and outreach plans, potential barriers to success, and timelines for the PPG.

The CO highlighted that the aim of the proposed AGATA SRP is to significantly advance the current knowledge on the Antarctic atmosphere and geo-space, and in a bipolar interhemispheric context. The research will be centred around three main questions (see below) and eight further general scientific open questions.

- How are different atmospheric layers coupled in the polar regions?
- How does the upper polar atmosphere respond to increased geomagnetic activity, including energy transfer from space?
- How does the whole polar atmosphere impact short- and long-term climate variations?

AGATA will monitor, investigate and better understand the polar atmosphere, to contribute to the understanding of the Sun-Earth interactions, and to support the sciences interests in removing or mitigating the atmospheric contribution negatively affecting their observations.

So far, AGATA has set up the required governance structures, submitted the AGATA PPG which was subsequently approved, held the AGATA Kick-Off Meeting at the International Union of Geodesy and Geophysics (IUGG) on 12 July 2023, and submitted the SRP proposal to the SCAR Executive Committee.

The CO noted that there have been three main barriers to success for the group. The first was the possible overlap with objectives of other Action Groups, but this has been resolved, with synergies and possible areas of collaborations identified. The second was the limited interaction with stakeholders involved in management of infrastructure/e-infrastructure. This has been resolved by including a representative from Standing Committee on Antarctic Data Management (SC-ADM) in the governance of AGATA, and there are plans to involve a representative of COMNAP too. The third barrier was the limited budget provided by SCAR. However, funding has been secured from the Scientific Committee on Solar Terrestrial Physics (SCOSTEP) for the kick-off meeting, and additional funding from other institutions at a national level are in the pipeline.

AGATA now plans to revise their SRP proposal according to comments made during this meeting and, in accordance with the SCAR guidelines for new SRPs, will submit a 'letter of intent' to submit a proposal at the 2024 Delegates Meeting. It will propose potential reviewers in February 2024 and submit the final SRP proposal in May 2024, for consideration by the SCAR Delegates meeting in August 2024.

It was pointed out by the AntClim<sup>Now</sup> CO that some of the science supported by AGATA is focused primarily on the Arctic and that SCAR funding is relevant to Antarctic research. One group leader queried whether both SCAR and the International Arctic Science Committee (IASC) could or should jointly endorse AGATA although the AntClim<sup>Now</sup> CO pointed out SCAR's primary focus on the Antarctic and highlighted that some of the science that had been presented was primarily of relevance to the Arctic and was not a major part of the Antarctic Climate variability system.

Tom Naish and Daniela Liggett noted that it would be beneficial for AGATA to identify one or two big science questions that summarised and encompassed the whole project, and also to show (possibly through a diagram) where AGATA sits in relations to other SCAR activities and where it would advance science and have impact.

**Action: AGATA leadership to revise its proposal in line with feedback from the meeting.**

## **2.4 Other science programmes and topics**

### **Astronomy and Astrophysics from Antarctica (AAA)**

The meeting noted the report submitted for this agenda item by AAA ([Link to Paper](#)). The report for AAA was presented by the Chair of the group, Jim Madsen, and covered the group's current activities and an explanation of Antarctica's importance for AAA.

The AAA chair emphasised that Antarctica provides a unique viewing platform for researchers in astronomy and astrophysics.

He reported that the AAA topical meeting has been held every other year even through the Covid-19 pandemic. The next meeting will be held in Svalbard where over 30 sessions will be held over three days. He highlighted that this is an area where SCAR provides invaluable support as it enables groups to bring together diverse communities.

There have been opportunities to expand to countries not usually associated with Antarctic or polar research programs. The Chair highlighted a project with colleagues in Thailand and involving American and Korean scientists as well as a Chinese scientific icebreaker as an example of this.

### **Bedmap3**

The meeting noted the report submitted for this agenda item by Bedmap3 ([Link to Paper](#)). The report was presented to the Committee by Kenny Matsuoka on behalf of Peter Fretwell and covered recent achievements and current plans.

Comparative maps of the data collected for Bedmap1, Bedmap2, and Bedmap3 were presented, indicating that the coverage of Bedmap3 will be far more complete than the two previous iterations with the majority of Antarctica covered.

While there are currently no plans for Bedmap4, it is agreed that the dataset should be updated more regularly, with for example a set month every year for data to be added. It is acknowledged that while quality control for the data submitted is not yet perfect, it has greatly improved and work to improve in this area is ongoing.

The President praised Bedmap3 for their outstanding efforts to produce such a useful product for the research community.

## **3. Standing Committees**

### **3.1 Standing Committee on Humanities and Social Sciences (SC-HASS)**

A report was submitted for this agenda item by SC-HASS ([Link to Paper](#)). Co-Chief Officer, Peder Roberts, presented the report on the group's achievements and future plans.

Currently SC-HASS has a 250-strong membership base comprised of self-nominated individuals. The community is still being built and this process strengthens the bottom-up structure, which is a key element of the group's identity.

A successful in-person conference was held in Lisbon for the first time in four years. With over 100 presenters and four parallel sessions, the event helped strengthen the

feeling that the community had resumed some momentum that had been stalled by the covid-19 pandemic.

At the Lisbon Conference it was decided that in future SC-HASS conferences, which happen every odd-year, will alternate between in person and primarily online formats.

This was motivated by equity and inclusivity concerns but also reducing SC-HASS carbon emissions. Furthermore, this would enable SC-HASS to fund twice as many people to attend the in-person conferences.

SC-HASS continues to contribute to other SCAR groups such as SC-ATS, Ant-ICON, INSTANT, and the Capacity Building, Education and Training Group (CBET). Group leadership would like to encourage group members to engage more in SCAR activities and would be glad to hear from other groups if there are areas where SC-HASS can get involved.

SC-HASS has three active Action Groups: the Action Group on Intrinsic Value in Antarctica (AGIVA) expects to publish a keystone publication within the next year; the Action Group on Antarctic Tourism Research (Ant-TAG) has begun to coordinate future publications; the Action Group on Public Engagement with Antarctic Research (PEAR) has set up a seminar series online which will serve as a test for a more general SC-HASS online seminar series in the future. The Action Group on Resilience and the Future of Science-based Decision-making for Antarctica (PoLSciNex AG) has concluded its work.

There are currently multiple externally-funded projects in which SC-HASS members are either leaders or participants, such as those listed below:

- 'Political Philosophy Looks to Antarctica' (Norwegian Research Council) and Dynamic Territory (2020-2025, ECR Starting Grant)
- 'Transforming Tourists' Antarctic Experience' (2021-2024, Australian Research Council)
- 'Polar Tourism: Research Programme on Assessment of Impacts and Responses' (2022-2025, Dutch Research Council).

Furthermore, SC-HASS members have published a number of papers this year, notably on topics of policy related to tourism and human presence in Antarctica, indicating the increased participation of SC-HASS in the current and ongoing debates on Antarctic science and governance. Books on the history of the polar regions and archaeology were also published this year.

SC-HASS will be attending the 2024 OSC and convening several sessions, but would welcome the opportunity to participate in relevant or interdisciplinary sessions organised by other SCAR groups. One bursary has been earmarked for an ECR to present at the OSC. In the future, SC-HASS aims for this bursary to be a recurring funding opportunity for ECRs to present at the OSC. Other bursaries will also be available for the OSC.

### ***3.2 Standing Committee on Antarctic Data Management (SC-ADM)***

A report was submitted for this agenda item by SC-ADM ([Link to Paper](#)) and presented by Frank Nitsche on behalf of Jonathan Kool, covering both recent SC-ADM activities and future plans.

SC-ADM organises a monthly virtual call where fifteen to twenty countries are usually represented, as well as an annual meeting. As SC-ADM should have an appointed representative from each SCAR member, it was suggested that Delegates should be approached to assist in boosting participation. The monthly meetings have been useful in keeping projects active and members engaged. The first annual in-person meeting

since the beginning of the Covid-19 pandemic will take place in November 2023 as part of the Pola Data Forum which will run from October 30<sup>th</sup> to November 3<sup>rd</sup> 2023.

[SCAR Report 42](#) on SCAR Data Policy was published in September 2022 by SC-ADM. The report highlighted five key principles:

- Data must be ethically open,
- Data should be free,
- Data must be provided in a timely manner,
- FAIR principles should be applied to the greatest extent practicable,
- All data must be accompanied by a complete set of metadata.

SC-ADM's activities including entering data into the Antarctic Metadata Directory (AMD) hosted by NASA, which currently contains 10,287 data records approximately. The group increasingly encourages National Antarctic Data Centres to provide data on their websites tagged with schema.org in order to support federated search.

Over the past year, SC-ADM has been working on the Polar Federated Search Tool (POLDER) with the World Data System and the Arctic Data Committee. The idea behind this project is to create a tool which can pull datasets from data centres tagged with schema.org rather than having to update a single data centre. A prototype has been developed based on schema.org.

The Polar Data Forum V will take place in October-November 2023 hosted at the British Antarctic Survey. A joint meeting with the Arctic Data Committee will be held as many countries operate polar data centres rather than separate Antarctic and Arctic data centres. A workshop on Polar Vessel Data has been planned with the aim to exchange on best practices and improve data pipelines across international organisations. The annual SC-ADM meeting will take place during the same period.

SC-ADM members are involved in the UN Ocean Decade, notably in the Southern Ocean Task Force working on the Developed Southern Ocean Action Plan.

Future plans include supporting developing National Antarctic Data Centres, producing documentation on best practices, and working with the new South African Polar Research Infrastructure Platform as a test case and an opportunity to develop documentation.

SC-ADM also has other on-going activities, including:

- Increasing SC-ADM membership and making it more relevant for member states,
- Engaging with SRPs and other SCAR groups,
- Increasing data management and delivery capabilities for developing National Antarctic Programmes,
- Continuing to engage with the UN Ocean Decade,
- Improving data search capability,
- Improving global data interoperability, especially for icebreaker and marine data.

**Decision: SCAR Secretariat to actively direct new Member countries to SC-ADM.**

### ***3.3 Standing Committee on Antarctic Geographic Information (SC-AGI)***

A report was submitted for this agenda item by SC-AGI ([Link to Paper](#)) and presented by Louise Ireland, covering recent project outcomes and future SC-AGI projects. While

meetings were postponed during the Covid-19 pandemic, there have been regular online meetings for the past two years.

There have been four major outcomes. The first is the regular update of the Antarctic Digital Database (ADD) which compiles topographic data of Antarctica to 60°S. It was updated in November and May of this year to reflect the changes to ice fronts and coastline. All data is available in web map ([add.scar.org](http://add.scar.org)). The second major SC-AGI achievement is the completion of the Air Operations Planning Maps, which provides a consistent map series specifically for air operations, with full continent-wide coverage. There have been discussions regarding updates to data and cartographic styling. Third, four names have been added to the Composite Gazetteer of Antarctica (CGA), bringing the total of named features to 39,140. Finally, SC-AGI produced [SCAR Report 41](#) on *International Principles and Procedures for Antarctic Place Names*, which was presented at the United National Group of Experts on Geographic Names (UNGEGN) meeting. The UNGEGN encourages all SCAR nations to reference this report for future name contributions.

SC-AGI has identified some challenges to their work. Contributions to long-standing projects, such as the Antarctic Digital Database or the Map Catalogue, can be difficult to come by and a more pro-active approach to gathering up-to-date data is necessary, for example by directly approaching countries conducting topographical surveys. The maintenance and development of these projects necessitates resources and time, which can sometimes be lacking. There have been discussions regarding guidelines for publishing geographical datasets due to the need for standardisation to enable datasets to be integrated into the portals.

In early 2024, SC-AGI is planning to hold a workshop to review the Air Operations Planning Maps to ensure consistency, appropriate styling, and discuss the inclusion of new data sources. Discussions on geographic data standards and SC-AGI approved datasets are being planned. The Map Catalogue will be redeveloped, as will the SCAR CGA. The Antarctic Digital Database will be updated twice in 2024, as per usual. All previous versions of the ADD coastline dataset, dating back to 1993, will be released. Finally, SC-AGI will be represented on the ISO Technical Committee 211, which works towards the standardisation of digital geographic information.

SC-AGI is currently working on an AI change detection algorithm for the Antarctic coastline. A language processing AI to be used for place names is also being discussed.

## 4. SCAR and Policy Advice

### 4.1 Standing Committee on the Antarctic Treaty System (SC-ATS)

A report was submitted for this agenda item by SC-ATS ([Link to Paper](#)), and presented by Chief Officer, Susie Grant, covering the highlights of SC-ATS work this year and their future plans.

SC-ATS activities this year included the production of 27 science-policy papers across a wide range of topics as advice to the Committee for Environmental Protection (CEP), Antarctic Treaty Consultative Meeting (ATCM), and Commission for the Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources (CCAMLR). There were a number of collaborations across many SCAR groups as well as affiliated groups and other partners including COMNAP, the International Association of Antarctic Tour Operators (IAATO), WMO/WCRP. SC-ATS participated in the Special Joint CEP/ATCM Session focused on implementing the Antarctic Climate Change and the Environment (ACCE) Decadal Synopsis. As part of their capacity-building activities, SC-ATS and Ant-ICON hosted a science-policy fellowship scheme which enabled the funding and mentoring

of two fellows. The fellowships were a resounding success and plans are in place to continue this scheme in the coming years. SC-ATS also coordinated SCAR's input into also participated in a number of CCAMLR meetings during 2023, as detailed in the report.

A number of challenges have been identified by SC-ATS. First, is the challenge of ensuring equity and inclusivity in the development of advice, and demonstrating the scientific independence and objectivity of SCAR to Antarctic Treaty Parties and CCAMLR members. Second, the capacity of SCAR groups and SC-ATS members to develop and deliver advice and respond to requests, needs to be balanced with ensuring manageable workloads, broad representation, and input from all relevant science groups. Effective communication between SC-ATS and science groups is key, as is the provision of practical guidance for science groups on the provision of advice to policy bodies. Third, as the ACCE group has ceased its activities, the need for a new approach regarding the provision of coordinated advice on climate change should be discussed.

**Action: SC-ATS to provide detailed guideline documentation on SC-ATS processes to SCAR members, in partnership with Ant-ICON.**

Future plans for the group include a webinar for SCAR science groups, the creation and dissemination of a practical guidance document for SCAR groups, the launching of the next Ant-ICON/SC-ATS Science-Policy Fellowships, and preparations for the 2024 ATCM and CCAMLR meetings.

Several group leaders suggested the creation of 'Antarctic report cards' in connection with AntClim<sup>Now</sup>, Ant-ICON, as well as the WCRP and the WMO, in order to provide policy makers with standardised, comprehensive and up-to-date reports.

The President thanked SC-ATS for all their hard work producing papers for ATCM, CEP, and CCAMLR meetings, as well as representing SCAR at these meetings. He expressed the SCAR Executive Committees' appreciation for their contributions to the success of SCAR's visibility in science-policy related matters.

**Action: SCAR groups to note that any science informing policy MUST go through SC-ATS in order for a unified and coherent SCAR policy to be presented.**

#### **4.2 Other Policy-related Plans**

The Executive Director (ED), Chandrika Nath, and the Executive Officer (EO), Eoghan Griffin jointly presented the paper on Policy-related Plans which can be found [here](#).

#### **Update on the Antarctic Environments Portal**

The Executive Director explained that the Antarctic Environments Portal ([environments.aq](http://environments.aq)) is a resource which provides easy-to-understand scientific information through easily-digested briefings and summaries focused on the Antarctic Treaty System (ATS) and the Committee for Environmental Protection. It is aimed at policy makers but is also available to the general public. SCAR has been managing the portal since January 2020.

This year, four new information summaries and three infographics have been published. The portal was well-received at the CEP XXV and the ATCM XLV, and an increase in usage has been noted around these meetings.

Finding individuals willing to create summaries or briefings for the portal can be a challenge. SCAR would like to encourage members of SCAR to volunteer subjects and create briefings or summaries for the portal. The portal is currently funded by the remaining funds of when it was set up. To date, Australia, Korea and Türkiye have provided funding which will allow to continue operating the website until roughly August

2024, but a decision regarding long term SCAR support for the Portal must be taken at the 2024 Delegates meeting.

### IPCC membership

At the 2022 Delegates Meeting, the possibility of SCAR applying for observer status at the IPCC was raised and the Secretariat was actioned to investigate further. However, participants at this meeting suggested that SCAR scientists were already involved in the work of the IPCC and that there might not be much added value to be gained from SCAR observer status, balanced against the additional administrative burden.

**Action: SCAR Executive Committee to consult further with SCAR groups to decide on whether to apply for observer status at the IPCC.**

### Update on international policy activities (UNFCCC, COP)

The update on international policy activities was presented by the Executive Officer. Currently these activities are focused on the UNFCCC and the COP.

At COP27 in 2022, SCAR held an official side event, entitled “Slow Onset, Irreversible Impacts Beyond Adaptation: Global Stocktake, Implementation and 1.5° Ambition”, as well as five events at the International Cryosphere Climate Initiative’s (ICCI) Cryosphere Pavilion. The ICCI is a crucial part of how SCAR can be present and seen at these events. Official accreditations are important to get SCAR representatives into official meetings. SCAR is looking to continue to have a presence at both UNFCCC events and future COPs.

For the COP28 in 2023, SCAR has secured its accreditation and is currently working with groups within SCAR and the ICCI on its participation at the event. An official application for a side event on sea level rise is still pending. Discussions with ICCI are ongoing regarding how SCAR can participate in COP28.

The ICCI is a crucial partner for SCAR in order to help more SCAR members and researchers attend and present at COP events. This has been a successful relationship which should be strengthened even more in the future. The Prince Albert II of Monaco Foundation, the WMO and the International Science Council (ISC) have also been useful partners.

There is a wider effort across various partners to raise the profile of the cryosphere in discussions. A coalition of parties under the banner of ‘Ambition on Melting Ice’ led by Chile and Iceland and coordinated by the ICCI has been active in this area. SCAR is in discussions with ICCI on how this goal can be furthered.

The Polar Initiative was signed last year with SCAR, the Prince Albert II of Monaco Foundation, the Oceanography Foundation in Monaco and IASC. The initiative allows for the funding of one fellowship per year for the next four years. This funding goes directly into the SCAR Fellowship funding and enables SCAR to fund one extra fellow. There is one criterion attached, which requires the funding to go towards a project related to biodiversity and climate change. In 2022 there was the first Polar Symposium. Plans for a second Polar Symposium in 2024 are underway in partnership with IASC. Currently there are discussions regarding what themes this next symposium should address. There are also talks regarding the continuation of the initiative’s fellowships as well as the broadening of the initiative.

A discussion regarding how to facilitate the attendance of SRPs at COPs highlighted the difficulties of SCAR groups to plan for COPs due to late notification of opportunities by the UNFCCC. A cross-SRP approach was suggested if groups were informed of COPs early enough in advance, especially if groups were able to meet at Open

Science Conferences beforehand. Issues regarding the carbon footprint of attending COPs and the commercial aspect of COPs were also mentioned. It was noted that while some meetings and events could only be accessed by those accredited, there is also an 'external' event which is open to the public.

**Action: Secretariat to work with relevant SCAR groups to prepare some internal documentation on the value of representing SCAR at COP meetings, and to create a timeline for groups to refer to, which includes all important SCAR related event (such as COPs and Bonn Meetings) which happen on a yearly basis, as well as their significance.**

## 5. Capacity Building

### 5.1 Capacity Building, Education and Training (CBET)

A report was submitted for this agenda item by CBET ([Link to Paper](#)). The Vice-President for Capacity Building, Education and Training (VP for CBET), Burcu Özsoy, gave a background on the history of the SCAR Fellowship scheme, Visiting Scholar programme and the SCAR Medals. The VP for CBET highlighted that, since the initiation of the Fellowship scheme, more than 80 fellowships have been awarded. Since the Visiting Scholar programme began in 2013, 26 scholarships have been awarded.

The VP for CBET then provided an update on the status of the 2023 Fellowship scheme and the Visiting Scholars scheme.

Lastly, nominations for the SCAR medals will be launched by the end of 2023.

The VP for CBET also reported on the SRP Fellowship scheme and ECR support within the science groups. In 2022, as part of the SCAR INSTANT fellowship goal to increase ECR involvement in INSTANT activities, five fellows from Brazil, Sri Lanka, Australia, China, and Germany were approved, each receiving \$5,000 USD.

An annual call for the AntClim<sup>Now</sup> Data Set Development and Stewardship scheme has been established, with two awards of \$3,700 USD each allocated for 2023.

In 2023, Ant-ICON, in collaboration with SC-ATS, launched a joint science-policy fellowship scheme. The first fellow from Uruguay participated in and presented a paper at the CEP meeting in Helsinki in May 2023, while the second fellow from the USA will attend the CCAMLR meeting in Hobart in October 2023.

Most groups, including the SRPs, primarily support ECRs through travel grants. As of September 1st, out of 106 travel grants given, 92 (87%) were granted to ECRs. In terms of total funds allocated, out of approximately \$118,000 awarded, around \$103,000 (90%) was dedicated to supporting ECRs.

The report was then followed by some discussion around the travel grants offered by science groups and SRPs. This brought up the question of how SCAR groups should determine who is eligible for a travel grant. One group leader suggested that the grants should be offered, not just to ECRs, but also to individuals from developing or emerging economies to ensure a wider outreach of funding. There was no common way in which these criteria were determined, though the results were similar. It was agreed that whichever system SCAR uses to determine these countries, that this should be more transparent and communicated via the website. It was pointed out that the system should not necessarily be based purely on a country's per capita income, but also ECR access to funding.

**Action: SCAR Executive Committee to provide guidance to groups on the criteria they should use to decide who is eligible for a travel grant.**

## 5.2 Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Group (EDI)

A report was submitted by the EDI Group ([Link to Paper](#)) and presented by the group leader, Adriana Gulisano. This new Action Group works towards the implementation of the EDI objective expressed in the recent SCAR Strategic Plan.

The EDI Group is in the process of developing a Code of Conduct which is currently being reviewed by SCAR expert consultants. The SCAR EDI statement was approved in July 2023 and is embedded in the Code of Conduct.

The EDI Group reported on the development of a Code of Conduct and the related reporting process. The Action Group requests that once the Code of Conduct is finalised, the Executive Committee helps identify a person, or persons, who will handle the reporting emails. Once the Code of Conduct and reporting tool have been approved by the Delegates they will be published on the SCAR website and SCAR social media channels. There will also be a specific code of conduct for the OSC which will be agreed before the OSC starts.

Achievements of the EDI AG include the funding of a report (in progress) reviewing EDI over the last three OSCs, contributing to the International Science Council's Standing Committee for Gender Equality in Science (SCGES) webinar, monthly social media posts relating to EDI in polar sciences, the publication of several papers, participation in the 2024 OSC International Scientific Organising Committee (ISOC), and the translation of SCAR application forms and information related to SCAR Medals, Fellowships and Visiting Scholars into the four Antarctic Treaty languages.

The EDI AG has actively grown their cooperation network which currently includes the Association of Polar Early Career Scientists (APECS), SCGES, the Southern Ocean Observing System EDI group, and COMNAP. The Action Group is in the process of growing their network even further.

At present, the EDI group plans to finish the reporting activities, increase the number of active members, participate actively in all relevant OSC activities, and provide EDI training workshops in tandem with APECS. This last activity would require further funding than the group currently has available.

The EDI Group suggested the creation of regular online EDI workshops for the SCAR community.

## 6. Open Science Conference 2024 Update

The Vice-President for Administration, Marcelo Leppe, gave a presentation summarising recent updates on the organisation of the 11th Open Science Conference, which will be hosted in Pucón, Chile from the 19 – 23 August 2024. The Business Meetings will be held 17-18 August 2024 and the Science Group Business Meetings will be taking place on Wednesday 21st August 2024, both in Pucón, Chile. The conference venue in Pucón has been reserved for two days before and after the event to allow subsidiary groups to organise trainings and other meetings. More information on the conference is available in the [official meeting paper](#).

The Delegates Meeting will take place in Punta Arenas, Chile from the 26 - 28 August 2024. The OSC and Delegates Meeting are taking place in different locations because there is no conference space or accommodation large enough to host the OSC in Punta Arenas.

There was some discussion around hybrid facilities for the meeting and a consideration of the carbon footprint of these events.

## 7. Partnerships and Co-sponsored Activities

A report on Partnerships and Co-sponsored Activities was submitted for this agenda item ([Link to Paper](#)).

### 7.1 Southern Ocean Observing System (SOOS)

The Executive Officer of SOOS, Alyce Hancock, gave an update on current activities, highlighting the major activity of the last 12 months as being the first ever SOOS Symposium, "Southern Ocean in a Changing World", with over 300 attendees from 25 countries. Further information, including the SOOS community statement, can be found at: <https://soos.aq/soos-symposium-2023>.

In addition, SOOS received a new bid for the continued sponsorship of the International Project Office in Hobart. Several international and national sponsors are continuing to support the work of SOOS. Additionally, it was reported that SOOS will be involved in upcoming policy forums, such as CCAMLR, COP28 and the ATCM 2024.

The ED added that SOOS has a major involvement in the UN Ocean Decade and Southern Ocean Task Force.

### 7.2 UN Decade and Decade Collaborative Centre (DCC)

A report was submitted for this agenda item ([Link to Paper](#)). The EO summarised the Southern Ocean Task Force's efforts over the past year. A key development in 2023 has been SCAR's application to be a Decade Collaborative Centre (DCC), which was accepted in June 2023. The focus of the DCC on building a community of stakeholders and coordinating efforts related to the Decade's goals and the Southern Ocean Action Plan.

### 7.3 International Polar Year 2032-33 (IPY)

The ED presented a report ([Link to Paper](#)) on the current state of discussions on the next IPY (2032-33). Planning discussions to date have been coordinated by SCAR and IASC and have involved WMO, European Polar Board (EPB), ISC, and Arctic indigenous communities' organisations, as well as representatives from SCAR SGs, SC-ATS, SC-AGI, SC-HASS, SOOS, and the Integrated Climate and Ecosystem Dynamics group (ICED). A timeline and concept note are to be finalised by October 2023. It is planned that an International Office for the IPY will be set up by 2025. As part of the build up towards the IPY, a bipolar OSC is planned for 2030 and the host country will need to be agreed upon by both SCAR and IASC.

**Action: The Executive Committee to decide on process for determining location of bipolar OSC meeting in 2030.**

### 7.4 Antarctic Monitoring and Assessment Programme (ANMAP)

In June 2023, the Executive Committee approved the creation of Antarctic Monitoring and Assessment Programme (ANMAP), a new co-sponsored activity. Its principal function will be to facilitate sufficient and reliable chemical observations data from Antarctica, in order to advise on international chemical policy. It will work closely with the Input Pathways of Persistent organic pollutants to Antarctica (ImPACT) towards this goal.

### **7.5 New partnerships**

The ED reported that the Secretariat and ExCom have been working towards to fostering closer partnerships with relevant Latin American and South East Asian organisations. SCAR will be represented at the next Asian Forum for Polar Sciences (AFoPS) with the goal of growing links between both organisations. The presence of SCAR at the next RAPAL meeting in 2024 to deliver a presentation is being discussed. RAPAL is a Latin American forum for the coordination of scientific, logistical, and environmental activities in the Antarctic area, and holds annual meetings in Latin America. In addition, the ED reported that a meeting with the Climate and Cryosphere project (CliC) of the World Meteorological Organisation (WMO) has taken place with the aim of developing links and identifying synergies. The Secretariat continues to grow links with the International Science Council and the Project Officer gave a well-received presentation at the ISC's mid-term meeting in 2023.

## **8. Cross-cutting Issues**

### **8.1 Communications and website**

A report was submitted for this agenda item ([Link to Paper](#)). The Project Officer (PO), Johanna Grabow, presented an overview of SCAR communication activities and the redesign for the new SCAR website. Key information from the presentation and images of the new website can be found in the SCAR Communications Activities and Website report.

The PO highlighted the success of the animation on the Antarctic Climate Change and the Environment (ACCE) report, "Our Future Depends on Us", which has received 11,000 views to date.

The PO reported on the SCAR website migration and explained that the rationale is both to improve user experience, and to move to a more sustainable platform (WordPress).

The PO also reminded groups of the channels available through the SCAR Secretariat to promote their work.

**Action: A reminder to SCAR groups to send updates, science news and events from to the Secretariat for publication in the newsletter and other media channels.**

### **8.2 Feedback on guidance document for SCAR groups**

The ED noted that a guidance document for SCAR groups is in preparation. This document aims to bring together all available guidance for groups in one place, covering a range of topics including on establishing a new group, leadership, reporting, and diverse administrative matters

**Action: Secretariat to circulate the guidance document to Science Group leaders before the end of the year.**

### **8.3 Review of processes for maintaining links with partners**

The ED gave an overview on how SCAR maintains links with key partners, highlighting that any links with policy bodies should be coordinated through SC-ATS.

Additionally, if a SCAR group should want to form new links with COMNAP, this should be brought to the Executive Committee first. ExCom meets periodically with

COMNAP’s Executive Committee so new links between science groups and COMNAP can be easily facilitated via these meetings.

Clarification on how groups should establish links with outside bodies will be included in the guidance document in preparation.

**8.4 Any Other Issues**

The ED noted that an informal discussion group is being formed to address carbon reduction across all SCAR activities and that there is still an opportunity for volunteers to be involved in the initiative. The aim of the discussion group will be to formulate ideas on how SCAR can reduce its carbon footprint and how it can offer guidance to groups on the issue.

**Action: Those interested in joining the SCAR carbon reduction discussion group should contact the ED.**

**9. Secretariat (CLOSED)**

The ED presented the Secretariat report ([Link to Paper](#)). She began by reminding the ExCom of recent staffing changes – namely Rosemary Nash’s retirement on 7th September, and the upcoming maternity leave (12-month period is anticipated) of Hayley Westlake. Angharad Downes will replace Hayley and is already working one day a week to make handover smoother. The ED highlighted that both Hayley and Angharad have settled in very well and are doing a great job.

The ED then reminded the Directors of the key recommendations of the internal audit report into Secretariat operations, focusing on HR and Finance, that was produced in early 2023 by Marvellous Minds (MM) and is attached as well as detailed in the Secretariat report. She highlighted the finding that “even though the Secretariat has been under considerable stress, it had maintained a high level of service to the SCAR community whilst also maintaining financial and organisational probity”. She highlighted key recommendations, listed below. Note that some of these are already being actioned, particularly the appraisal report and pay review.

Recommendations	Status
Succession planning for the retirement of the Administrative Officer	Completed
Review all job descriptions to ensure they accurately reflect what is being undertaken and what is needed.	Underway
Undertake a workflow analysis, linked to the review of Job Descriptions and functions, use this to better plan for and manage resources.	Underway
Designated named and trained Data Protection Officer and Health and Safety Officer	Outstanding due to staff turnover (compliance issue)

Review the Staff Handbook, address policy gaps such as work-life balance, wellbeing.	Initial review done, external support required to complete
Review the appraisal system and dissociate it from the pay review process	Appraisal review completed, awaiting sign-off
Review the current practice of pay increase based on inflation plus increase linked to performance	Pay review complete, requires discussion by ExCom
Put in place a formal training plan and robust Personal Development Plans for all staff	Outstanding but initial review of training needs has been conducted
Consider how to provide more comprehensive HR support to the Secretariat	Support is being provided by Marvellous Minds but is not long-term solution
All volunteers should receive a role description and a Code of Conduct for Volunteers before agreeing to volunteer. These should be maintained on the website together with a mandatory induction briefing. This will provide compliance with UK Charities law.	Outstanding (compliance issue) – although EDI group have drafted a code of conduct
There should be more detailed written information on the expectations and requirements for each Executive role, possibly supported by a short video	Outstanding (suggestion by MM that SCAR could use the Charities Commission guidance for new Trustees and agree that one of the VPs is responsible for leading on the induction and training of Trustees and other volunteers)
As well as mandatory induction training, Trustees and other volunteers should receive ongoing training to update them on changes to legislation and best practice.	Outstanding – need to consider how to implement
Provide appropriate training for all Trustees around roles, responsibilities, and UK employment laws.	Outstanding – need to consider how to implement

The ED described the workflow mapping process currently underway within the Secretariat and explained that although it was not completed, it was clear that there were resourcing gaps in the Secretariat, namely:

- HR/legal matters (e.g. keeping contracts and other paperwork up to date, recruitment, induction, training processes, maintaining insurance policies, organizational compliance)
- Maintaining organizational documentation – policies, processes, role descriptions etc. (both SCAR-wide and within Secretariat)
- Proactive support to groups (largely responsive)

The ED commented that large international initiatives (e.g. IPY, UN Decade) are placing increasing demands on Secretariat time.

She then explained to the Directors that SCAR has been advised to update its risk register by its auditors. The risk register is a requirement of the audit process and sets out key organisational risks along with an assessment of their likelihood and level of impact. The auditors have provided a suggested template including possible additional areas of risk for the Directors to consider. Directors will need to consider the suggestions, which fall under the following headings:

- Governance
- Operational risk
- Information technology
- Regulatory and compliance risk
- Financial risk
- Internal controls
- Fraud

Many of the issues suggested as possible risks, have also been identified by the internal audit process.

**Action: ED and EO to prepare a preliminary version of the revised risk register for consultation with the Executive Committee.**

Finally, the ED outlined what she had been told by SCAR's solicitors (Birketts) about whether or not SCAR Delegates were legally permitted to make decisions in between meetings.

- Decisions can be made by written resolution with 28-day response time (50% or greater response rate)
- Fully online meetings can be called in between Delegates meetings (solicitor indicates this may need some revision of articles)
- Informal agreement to a decision (e.g. over email) would need unanimous informed consent of the members entitled to vote and attend meetings.

**Action: ED to investigate whether SCAR could run electronic voting in conjunction with the written resolution or informal route, and whether it would be allowed to count non-votes as implicit agreement.**

It was noted that the kinds of decisions the Delegates might make between meetings would relate to e.g. approval of new groups and funding, and not admission of new members or appointments of Directors, which will remain a matter for the biennial delegates meeting.

The VP for Finance commented that SCAR was a small organisation and could not take on all the recommendations and needed to focus on priorities.

**Action: ED to identify top priorities from the internal audit report, and return to the next ExCom meeting with a traffic-lighted list of priorities for Executive Committee to consider.**

The ED also pointed out that additional HR support to the Secretariat was needed to address resourcing gaps and implement the recommendations of the internal audit. The discussion about HR support led to a further discussion about whether the responsibilities of the VP for Administration were appropriate, since a background in UK employment law is necessary to advise the ED on HR and administrative matters. The ED pointed out that ideally the Secretariat needs a source of HR support (e.g. a

third-party contractor) from within the UK to facilitate matters such as keeping staff policies up to date, drawing up contracts, advising on pay negotiations, etc., rather than receiving support from a Director who may not have a suitable background.

She said that the agreement with Citrus HR was only providing a minimum level of support e.g. in alerting her of changes to UK employment law and providing a platform for logging annual leave, etc.

A more general discussion ensued about the division of responsibilities. The VP for Science indicated that a disproportionate share of responsibility currently fell to the VP for Science and that some of this could potentially be taken on by the VP for Administration if the administrative responsibilities could be passed elsewhere.

**Action: VP for Science and ED to identify ways to distribute the responsibilities of the VP for Science more evenly across the Executive.**

## 10. SCAR Finances (CLOSED)

Jefferson Simões, the Vice-President for Finance, introduced the Finance Report ([Link to Paper](#)), including the summary of the financial situation at the end of 2022, noting that all of the accounts preparation and related audit work had been completed for 2023 and the relevant submissions to Companies House and the Charity Commission were in progress.

He noted that large bank balances remained in place at the beginning of 2023, but that this reflected the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. Group leaders were reminded that they need to make full use of their budgets by the end of 2024.

Overall, the organisation is in a comfortable financial position.

The VP for Finance noted that in addition to the cash in the bank, SCAR also maintains an Investment Portfolio, which has fluctuated in recent years due to several factors, including the economic situation in the UK. He did note that reductions in the equivalent USD\$ value of the Portfolio due to a weakened GBP£ means that we are gaining on other expenditure such as salaries and administrative costs that are paid in GBP£. Besides bank balances, the organisation's Investment Portfolio has been impacted by UK economic issues. The Portfolio has still gained value in GBP£ terms compared to the initial investment.

The expenditure directed to Early Career Researchers had already been introduced in the CBET Report, some of which was additional expenditure approved by the Executive Committee due to the surplus funds unspent as a result of the pandemic. It was noted that Delegates should be aware that a large fraction of the national contributions in fact return to individual members through ECR support.

The documents related to the annual audit are available as meeting papers.

Some changes have financially impacted 2023 and future budgets, including the addition of Luxembourg as an Associate member and the receipt of all arrears from Venezuela in early 2023, along with the acceptance of the increase in national contributions from 2025. These resulted in budgeted income reaching USD\$669,600 in 2023 and rising to USD\$810,000 in 2025.

A number of impediments to receiving national contributions remain as a result of restrictions within the international banking system. Iran have not been able to make a payment for the last 6 years resulting in arrears of USD\$42,000, however the arrears from Russia were recently received, totalling USD\$55,000. As a result, the accumulated national contribution arrears has been reduced by over USD\$100,000 in the last year.

The Executive Officer introduced the financial statement for 2022 and the budgets for 2023, 2024 and 2025.

From 2022, he noted that an exceptional gain of over USD\$40k from currency exchange had been achieved by taking advantage of the low value of the Sterling. As noted, the bank balances at the end of 2022 were high due to over USD\$500k of carried forward funds, with over USD\$200k available from contingency funds.

In 2023 the increase in arrears received allowed adjustments to be made by adding expenditure in some areas, and it also allowed a reduction in the amount needed from contingency funds to maintain a balanced budget.

None of the budgets have assumed that there are contingency funds generated in either 2023 and 2024. However, it is likely that there will be some contingency in 2023 based on salary savings to date and historically large contingency funds have been generated from even years such as 2024.

For the 2024 budget, expenditure has been increased based on revised salary figures which are now balanced with larger contribution from contingency funds. The existing contingency funds are sufficient to cover the contributions needed to achieve balance in all of the budgets presented (2023-2025).

By default, in 2020 and 2022 a 30% carry forward was applied to remaining funds for each SCAR Group. It is not expected that this will be the case in 2024 as we don't expect significant impacts from the pandemic to remain. It is always possible for Groups to make a case to the VP for Finance to request a carry forward for a particular purpose.

The 2023 and 2024 budgets have been balanced by making use of the contingency funds from 2022. In the 2025 budget, the additional national contributions (20% uplift) are factored in, resulting in the contribution from contingency, to balance the budget, reducing to less than USD\$20,000. The 2025 budget will therefore be expected to be balanced based on the contingency funds available at the end of 2024. However, it was noted that if additional Scientific Research Programmes are approved, then decisions would need to be made as to how the 2025 budget is re-balanced.

Overall, the projected bank balance at the end of 2025 would be less than USD\$60,000, but this reflects a scenario where all of the groups have fully spent their budgets through 2023, 2024 and 2025 and all of the other budget lines have been fully utilised.

Finally, the EO noted that an average of the USD to GBP exchange rate through the first half of 2023 has been used for all budgets (1.25 USD to GBP). Staff and administrative costs, in particular, indicated in the budgets could fluctuate significantly as a result of changes to the exchange rate.

The VP for Finance introduced an analysis of expenditure based on the proportion of budget allocated to the different overall categories (Science Activities; Science Advice; Administrative Expenses; Meetings; Capacity Building Education and Training; Publications).

In looking across the 2023, 2024 and 2025 budgets the proportions were not significantly different, and this reflected the situation where the contingency funds were being applied to achieve balanced budgets. The very large contingency contribution required in 2024 (over USD\$120,000) reflected how far the failure to secure increases in national contributions had stretched finances. The only increases in total national contributions since 2012 had been achieved through adding members and removing a membership category in 2016.

The VP for Finance noted the need to maintain a healthy balance between the proportion spent on administrative expenses compared to those on science and policy support. The EO noted that actual expenditure in any year is significantly boosted by

carried forward funds, which were only determined on a year-by-year basis. These were mainly applied to the science and policy support budget lines. So, it was only possible to accurately determine the final proportions of expenditure in retrospect for individual years. Further expenditure comparisons, including the carried forward funds, will be provided in future Finance Reports.

It was recommended that in future Finance Reports, the proportion of expenditure dedicated to travel should be made clear and that “Science Activities” could be renamed “Science Facilitation” to make it clear that front line research was not being funded. The VP for Finance also recommended that the issue of national contribution increases should be assessed with Delegates every four years.

It was suggested that fixed return investments could be considered for the Investment Portfolio and it will be added for discussion with the portfolio managers, scheduled for later in September 2023.

The main risks to the organisation from a financial perspective were identified as the possibility of international banking restrictions impeding the ability to receive national contributions and instability in the UK economy, with consequential impacts on currency exchange rates. One specific risk was the relatively low guarantee on bank deposits in the UK (GBP£ 85,000).

**Decision: The Executive Committee approved the opening of an additional bank account, with United Trust Bank, to spread the risk for deposits.**

## 11. Any other Business / Close of Meeting

The meeting closed.

### Appendix: List of Acronyms

AAA	Astronomy and Astrophysics from Antarctica
ACCE	Antarctic Climate Change and the Environment
ADD	Antarctic Digital Database
AFoPS	Asian Forum for Polar Sciences
AG	Action Group
AGATA	Antarctic Geospace and ATmosphere reseArch (Programme Planning Group)
AGE	Antarctic Geological Evolution
AGIVA	Action Group on Intrinsic Values in Antarctica
AI	Artificial Intelligence
AMD	Antarctic Metadata Directory (formerly Antarctic Master Directory)
ANMAP	Antarctic Monitoring and Assessment Programme
AntClim <sup>now</sup>	Near-term Variability and Prediction of the Antarctic Climate System
Ant-ICON	Integrated Science to Inform Antarctic and Southern Ocean Conservation ( <i>originally named Integrated Conservation Planning for Antarctica and the Southern Ocean</i> )
Ant-TAG	Action Group on Antarctic Tourism Research
APECS	Association of Polar Early Career Scientists
ARRN	Antarctic Radiation Regional Network
ATCM	Antarctic Treaty Consultative Meeting
ATS	Antarctic Treaty System / Antarctic Treaty Secretariat
BEDMAP	Antarctic Bedrock Mapping
CBET	Capacity Building, Education and Training

CCAMLR	Commission for the Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources
CEP	Committee for Environmental Protection (Antarctic Treaty)
CGA	Composite Gazetteer of Antarctica
CGG	Connecting Geophysics and Geology
CliC	Climate and Cryosphere Project (a project of the WCRP)
CO	Chief Officer
CoC	Code of Conduct
COMNAP	Council of Managers of National Antarctic Programs
COP	Conference of Parties (UNFCCC)
COVID-19	Coronavirus disease, emerged in 2019 and caused a global pandemic
DCC	Decade Collaborative Centre
ECR	Early-career researcher
ED	Executive Director
EDI	Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion
EG	Expert Group
e.g.	For example (from Latin: <i>exempli gratia</i> )
EG-BAMM	Expert Group on Birds and Marine Mammals
EG-GEOCON	Expert Group on Geological Heritage and Geoconservation
EO	Executive Officer
EPB	European Polar Board
ExCom	Executive Committee
FAIR	Data principles of <b>F</b> indable, <b>A</b> ccessible, <b>I</b> nteroperable, and <b>R</b> eusable
FPA2	Fondation Prince Albert II de Monaco
GEOCON	Geological Heritage and Geoconservation (Expert Group)
GSG	Geosciences Group
HR	Human Resources
IAATO	International Association of Antarctica Tour Operators
IASC	International Arctic Science Committee
ICCI	International Cryosphere Climate Initiative
ICED	Integrating Climate and Ecosystem Dynamics
ICEPRO	International Collaboration Effort for Improving Paleoclimate Research in the Southern Ocean (Action Group)
ImPACT	Input Pathways of persistent organic pollutants to AntarCTica
INSTANT	INStabilities & Thresholds in ANTArctica (formerly AISSL, then AIDSL)
IPCC	Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change
IPY	International Polar Year
ISC	International Science Council
ISO	International Organization for Standardization
ISOC	International Scientific Organising Committee
IUGG	International Union of Geodesy and Geophysics
LSG	Life Sciences Group
MM	Marvellous Minds
NASA	US National Aeronautics and Space Administration
OSC	Open Science Conference
PA2F	Prince Albert II of Monaco Foundation
PEAR	Action Group on Public Engagement with Antarctic Research
PO	Project Officer
POLDER	Polar Data Discovery Enhancement Research
PolSciNex	Action Group on Resilience and the Future of Science-based Decision-making for Antarctica
PPG	Programme Planning Group
PSG	Physical Sciences Group

RAPAL	Reunión de Administradores de Programas Antárticos Latinoamericanos (Administrative Network of Latin American Programmes in Antarctica)
SAER	State of the Antarctic Environment Reporting
SC-ADM	Standing Committee on Antarctic Data Management
SC-AGI	Standing Committee on Antarctic Geographic Information
SCAR	Scientific Committee on Antarctic Research
SC-ATS	Standing Committee on the Antarctic Treaty System
SCGES	Standing Committee on Gender Equality in Science of the International Science Council
SC-HASS	Standing Committee on Humanities and Social Sciences
SCOSTEP	Scientific Committee on Solar Terrestrial Physics
SG	Science Group
SOOS	Southern Ocean Observing System
SRP	Scientific Research Programme
UK	United Kingdom
UN	United Nations
UN Decade	UN Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development
UNFCCC	United National Framework Convention on Climate Change
UNGEEN	United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names
US / USA	United States of America
VP	Vice President
WCRP	World Climate Research Programme
WMO	World Meteorological Organisation
WP	Working Paper