

I am delighted and surprised to have been awarded the first SCAR Medal for International Scientific Co-ordination, not least as I can think of many other excellent scientists in SCAR who have a stronger claim on this award. For me the most encouraging element is that it recognises the efforts by many people over the past 15 years to build stronger connections with the Antarctic Treaty, to provide independent scientific advice on which good decisions about governance can be based and to utilise the interdisciplinarity of SCAR to good effect.

Although the award is to me it is also to those many scientists throughout SCAR who have helped in many ways to synthesise the data, to develop the arguments and to provide the drafts of papers that we have used to present science to the Treaty Parties in an accessible and, I hope, usable form. I would say that the number of key Treaty actions that are traceable to SCAR initiatives and papers is a clear testimony to the value of the work done by this group.

Presenting SCAR at the Antarctic Treaty Consultative Meetings is an unusual experience for most scientists. Not only is the atmosphere political but the audience is largely non-scientific and, in many cases, lacking any direct experience of the Antarctic. National political agendas rule many decisions and since progress is by consensus it can seem unreasonably slow at times. Yet the system has rules and a dynamic that we have been able to use effectively to make our scientific points, to draw attention to areas of scientific concern and to provide clear recommendations for action – as in the recent case of delisting of fur seals – where the data support it.

SCAR is the only ICSU body with such a close relationship with a major international legal and political instrument and our role as Observer is an important one as we are both expert in our science fields yet without any political or national affiliations. This independence gives us both authority and responsibility in our role at the ATCM, a dual accountability which I have tried to discharge on everyone's behalf. I hope that these firm foundations will continue to allow science to play a major role in all Treaty discussions and that my successor as Chair of the ATS Standing Committee will enjoy as much support and assistance as I have had.