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Agenda Item: ATCM 6b
Presented by: New Zealand,
Argentina,
Australia, Chile,
Norway,
United Kingdom,
SCAR
Original: English
Submitted: 30/4/2021

COVID-19 and Antarctica

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Working Paper submitted by New Zealand, Argentina, Australia, Chile, Norway, the United Kingdom, and SCAR

Summary

The 2021 Antarctic Treaty Consultative Meeting will be held virtually due to the ongoing COVID-19 crisis, one of the most devastating pandemics in history. New Zealand, Argentina, Australia, Chile, Norway, the United Kingdom and SCAR consider that a Resolution to mark this extraordinary circumstance would be appropriate. A draft Resolution is attached for Parties' consideration. It aims to record the implications of the pandemic for our work, and commit to continuing the important cooperation, fundamental to the Antarctic Treaty System, to manage risks to people in Antarctica and to Antarctic wildlife.

Recommendation

New Zealand, Argentina, Australia, Chile, Norway, the United Kingdom and SCAR recommend that the ATCM considers the attached draft Resolution, amends it as appropriate and through its adoption, commits to ongoing cooperation to minimise COVID-19's disruption to the Antarctic Treaty System's work.

Draft Resolution

COVID-19 and Antarctica

The Representatives,

Acknowledging that the 2021 Antarctic Treaty Consultative Meeting will be held virtually due to the ongoing COVID-19 crisis, one of the most devastating pandemics in history;

Acknowledging also that the 2020 Antarctic Treaty Consultative Meeting was cancelled due to the COVID-19 pandemic;

Further acknowledging the COVID-19 pandemic's significant implications for the facilitation of scientific research and international scientific cooperation in Antarctica since March 2020;

Celebrating the strong international cooperation and information sharing in the spirit of the Antarctic Treaty System that has managed risks to people in Antarctica and to Antarctic wildlife resulting from COVID-19 and that will support the management of any future similar risks;

Acknowledging and appreciating the important roles played by COMNAP, SCAR and IAATO to that end;

Desiring to continue momentum on our priority work in the furtherance of the principles and objectives of the Treaty and to continue to take a strongly precautionary approach to manage COVID-19 related risks;

Recommend that their governments:

1. Undertake to make progress on key issues of importance to the management of Antarctica and minimise the disruption to the work of the ATCM and CEP brought about by the global COVID-19 pandemic;
2. Undertake to that end to continue using innovative means to cooperate amongst Parties, Observers, and Invited Expert organisations, including through intersessional processes;
3. Commit to ongoing cooperation to ensure that COVID-19 risks to people in Antarctica and to Antarctic wildlife are minimised;
4. Encourage the continued cooperation, information sharing and development of best practice between National Antarctic Programmes, COMNAP, SCAR and IAATO to prevent the future transfer of COVID-19 to Antarctica and to support scientific research programmes to continue safely;
5. Further encourage National Antarctic Programmes, COMNAP, SCAR and IAATO to continue to developing protocols and guidelines, drawing on the lessons learned from the COVID-19 experience in preparation for any future similar eventualities.