



Agenda Item: CEP 3
Presented by: New Zealand,
Norway, SCAR,
Australia,
Belgium
Original: English
Submitted: 13/03/2014

Antarctic Environments Portal: Progress Report

Antarctic Environments Portal: Progress Report

Working Paper submitted by New Zealand, Australia, Belgium, Norway, SCAR.

Summary

There is a pressing need to improve the availability of, and access to, policy-ready information on Antarctic environments to support the implementation of the Protocol. The Antarctic Environments Portal (www.environments.aq) puts policy-ready information based on peer-reviewed science at the fingertips of the CEP. The Portal is operating in a beta (or development) phase, and will be fully functional by June 2015. It contains summary information on some of the CEP's priority issues. The Portal will be demonstrated during CEP XVII. Members are invited to provide feedback, and lend their support to the initiative.

Introduction

The role of the CEP is to provide advice to the ATCM on the effectiveness of measures taken pursuant to the Protocol, including on the state of Antarctic environments and the need for scientific research and environmental monitoring (Article 12 of the Protocol). The CEP has been advised that rapid changes in ocean and air temperature, sea ice extent and species distribution and abundance are being observed in parts of the Antarctic, and that further rapid changes are expected over the next century. These changes may be compounded by human activity (see for example *ATCM XXXVI WP38 The Antarctic Climate Change and the Environment (ACCE) Report: A Key Update*). For the CEP to fulfil its mandate within the context of changing Antarctic environments and increasing human activity, ready access to high quality, reliable, up-to-date scientifically-based information is needed.

The Antarctic Environments Portal is being designed to support the CEP to be well placed to provide advice to the ATCM. It presents reliable information on CEP priority issues, which Members can draw on as they see fit. The Portal supports SCAR's mission to provide independent, sound, scientifically-based information to the Antarctic Treaty System.

Background

At CEP XV (2012) New Zealand, SCAR and Australia introduced the concept of an Antarctic Environments Portal (*ATCM XXXV WP 57*) to support the effective implementation of the Protocol. Members welcomed the proposal, noting the importance of having ready access to information to support the CEP's work (para 7-10 of CEP report).

At CEP XVI (2013), New Zealand, Australia, Belgium, Norway and SCAR updated the CEP on the Portal (*ATCM XXXVI WP 28*) and demonstrated a mock-up. The Committee welcomed progress and encouraged further development of the initiative, which facilitates the link between Antarctic science and the CEP (para 5-13 of CEP report). The ATCM also welcomed the progress on the Antarctic environments Portal (para 96-98 ATCM report).

At CEP XV (2012) and CEP XVI (2013), and during informal intersessional discussions, members raised several questions relating to the role and functioning of the Portal – responses are provided below.

1. How is the Portal being managed and funded? How will it be managed and funded in the long term?

The development of the Portal is currently led, managed and funded by New Zealand. Antarctica New Zealand is managing the project and Landcare Research New Zealand is leading the technical design and

development. New Zealand has funding to fully develop the Portal by June 2015, and to maintain it until June 2016.

Development of the Portal is happening in partnership with SCAR, Australia, Belgium and Norway. A steering group comprised of scientists, policy and technical experts and a SCAR representative provide leadership, oversight and expert guidance to the Project Manager.

New Zealand does not intend to manage or fund this project in the long term. There are several potential options for the longer term management of the Portal. These might include government and non-government support, and a potential role for the Antarctic Treaty Secretariat could be explored. Members' views on long term maintenance and management options are welcome.

The technical aspects of the Portal website have been established to facilitate the easy transfer of the Portal to other hosts. It has also been designed to be efficient and relatively low-cost to maintain.

2. What is the CEP's role in the Portal?

The CEP is the primary audience for the Portal and is the main beneficiary of the information in the Portal. The CEP has supported the concept of the Portal, and we continue to seek CEP support for the initiative. However, it is essential that the content within the Portal remains independent of the CEP to ensure that the advice that the CEP receives is independent.

3. Is the Portal intended to make decisions or recommendations?

No. The Portal is a source of information. It presents reliable science-based information on CEP priority issues. Our aim is to make the Portal a valuable source of information for CEP Members to draw on to the extent that they wish.

4. Will the Portal be translated?

Yes. The main elements of the website will be presented in the four official languages of the Antarctic Treaty and Protocol. This includes information summaries, the text on the home page and the interactive map. At present, submissions of suggested content for the Portal can only be received in English, as we are not resourced to support editors fluent in four languages. The dynamic sections of the Portal, including comments fields will be in English only for the same reason.

5. Will there be a broad range of countries involved in and represented in the project?

The project is intended to be inclusive. Up to this point, we have been working amongst a group of Parties, who have expressed interest and have been prepared to contribute time to the project in its development stages. This Steering Group involves representatives from Australia, Belgium, New Zealand, and Norway and SCAR. We welcome wider involvement and encourage input from interested parties. We will establish a reference group in the coming months as the mechanism for receiving feedback and input from a wider group.

6. What review and editorial processes are in place for content presented in the Portal?

The Portal includes summaries of the state of knowledge on CEP priority issues, the management of those issues and environmental pressures. Information in the Portal is based on peer-reviewed science and existing CEP materials. The content is intended to be non-technical and a-political. It is subject to a robust editorial process.

Anyone can submit suggested content for the Portal. All content will be subject to rigorous review before it is made public. This review process is summarised in Figure 1.

In this interim development phase of the project, text in the Portal has been prepared by interested scientists and policy makers who have been approached by the Steering Group, and the Steering Group are functioning as an editorial committee. External reviews are being facilitated through SCAR's Standing Committee on the Antarctic Treaty System.

The future makeup of the editorial committee is not known, but it will include scientists and policy makers, a SCAR representative and a range of nationalities. In the future, and subject to resources, we plan to contract an editor to oversee the editorial processes. SCAR will continue to have a fundamental role in the editorial process, as the Portal objectives are strongly aligned with SCAR's mission to provide independent, sound, scientifically-based advice to the ATS and other policy makers, and to use science to identify emerging trends.

7. How can the Portal be independent and a-political?

Great care is being taken to ensure that the project is independent and a-political; these are guiding principles. We have developed the project such that anyone can contribute to the Portal, and that the wider science and policy community ensure that content is up to date, accurate, independent and a-political.

The content of the Portal will not duplicate existing information, include recommendations or provide raw data directly. SCAR will be a primary provider of content, in line with their role as independent scientific advisors to the Antarctic Treaty System.

Update and Next Steps

The Portal is operating in a beta (or development) phase, and will be fully functional by June 2015. At present, it contains information summaries on some of the CEP's priority issues and, on one issue emerging in the scientific literature that is related to a CEP priority issue. The information summaries and home page text have been translated and are in the four official languages of the Antarctic Treaty and Protocol. The interactive map is also largely functional, but not yet available in all Treaty languages.

In the coming year we will be incorporating more content and completing and testing the technical aspects of the website. The ability to log in and contribute material to the Portal will be in place in time for the SCAR Open Science Conference in August.

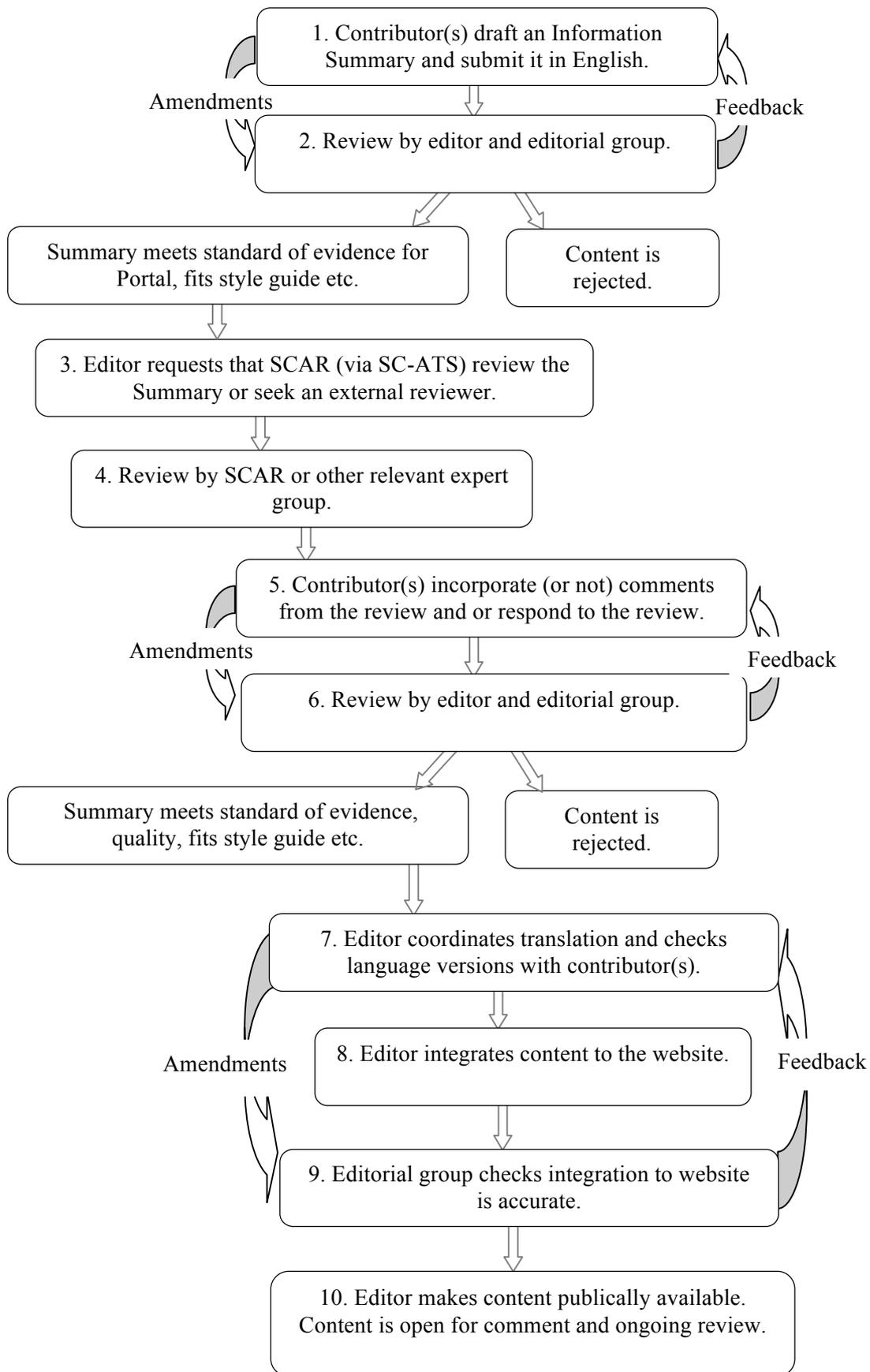
We invite and encourage participation in the project and feedback on the development to date. Broad engagement will ensure that the Portal will be best placed to meet the needs of CEP Members. We encourage Members to express their interest in being part of the project.

Recommendations

New Zealand, Australia, Belgium, Norway and SCAR recommend that the Committee:

1. Note the progress to develop an Antarctic Environments Portal;
2. Indicate their support for the project and its ongoing development, as the intended primary users of the Portal;
3. Provide comments and feedback to the proponents to support the further development of the Portal;
4. Encourage Members to continue to provide feedback via participation in an intersessional reference group.

Figure 1. Outline of editorial workflow for Information Summaries



Companion table for translation of text in Figure 1

| | | | |
|--|--|--|--|
| English | | | |
| 1. Contributor(s) draft an Information Summary and submit it in English. | | | |
| Amendments | | | |
| Feedback | | | |
| 2. Review by editor and editorial group. | | | |
| Summary meets standard of evidence for Portal, fits style guide etc. | | | |
| Content is rejected. | | | |
| 3. Editor requests that SCAR (via SC-ATS) review the Summary or seek an external reviewer. | | | |
| 4. Review by SCAR or other relevant expert group. | | | |
| 5. Contributor(s) incorporate (or not) comments from the review and or respond to the review. | | | |
| 6. Review by editor and editorial group. | | | |
| 7. Editor coordinates translation and checks language versions with contributor(s). | | | |
| 8. Editor integrates content to the website. | | | |
| 9. Editorial group checks integration to website is accurate. | | | |
| 10. Editor makes content publically available. Content is open for comment and ongoing review. | | | |