



IP **03**
Agenda Item: 2.5.1
Person Responsible: M Sparrow

EXCOM 2013

Barcelona, Spain 22/23rd July 2013

The International Polar Initiative (IPI)

Executive Summary

Title: The International Polar Initiative

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Introduction/ Background: In order to facilitate the concept of an International Polar Initiative (IPI) a Concept Note Steering Group was formed from representatives of AMAP, APECS, EPB-ESF, IASC, IASSA, ICSU, IOC, SCAR, WMO, UoA and UNEP. The Executive Director represented SCAR, but included the rest of the Executive Committee in the discussions. A website for further information has now been set up by the Canadian Polar Commission at <http://internationalpolarinitiative.org> and the latest version (December 2012) of the Concept Note can be downloaded from: http://internationalpolarinitiative.org/IPI_Concept_v.5-21.12.12.pdf

Recommendations/Actions and Justification: EXCOM are requested to note progress and comment as appropriate

Expected Benefits/Outcomes: If approved the IPI could result in improved coordination between organisations and more efficient use of resources. It should be noted that this is a 'top-down' initiative and buy-in from the Antarctic Community at least is still a challenge.

Partners: AMAP, APECS, EPB-ESF, IASC, IASSA, ICSU, IOC, WMO, UoA and UNEP...

Budget Implications: No funds requested as yet

The International Polar Initiative (IPI)

The International Polar Initiative - Background

The Polar Regions of the world are undergoing a range of fast and dramatic transformations, as demonstrated by the 2012 record minimum in Arctic sea-ice extent and the collapse of ice-shelves along the Antarctic Peninsula. The changes seen in the Polar Regions will have significant global impacts both on the environment and on society. The Polar Regions remain the largest observational data voids on the planet. We do not fully understand the complex interlinked processes governing the changes and variability observed and, as a result, predictions and projections for the Polar Regions tend to be characterized by significant biases and uncertainties compared with the rest of the globe.

Previous research, assessments, and experience of exploration and fieldwork, including the significant outcomes of the recent International Polar Year 2007-2008 (IPY), provide a basis for addressing these challenges. However, there is a need for a “behavioral” change in polar activities. The relative scarcity of available resources requires a highly coordinated, efficient, targeted, and systematic approach to planning and executing polar activities. Working together, coordinating efforts and sharing resources would make it possible to set ambitious goals for polar activities such as eventual implementation of an operational sustainable and comprehensive polar observing system. Such a system would significantly enhance our ability to predict polar weather, climate, hydrological and environmental conditions, to track human development trends in the polar regions, to enable adaptation to and facilitate mitigation of climate change, and to contribute to the protection and, when applicable, sustainable development, of the Polar Regions and of the planet as a whole.

To effectively address the challenges and efficiently use available resources, a new and novel framework for long-term cooperation between stakeholders with a mandate and interest in the Polar Regions, entitled the “International Polar Initiative” (IPI), has been proposed.

Envisioned Scope of Activities

The scope of the IPI is envisioned to include the full breadth of polar sciences, observations, modelling, prediction and services, education and outreach. It will follow a cross-disciplinary and Earth System approach, with focus on contributing to the sustainable development of the Polar Regions and the globe.

Envisioned Resources Required

If the final concept is approved the preparation of a joint plan of polar activities should be funded by prospective participants, requiring only minor cost. More funds may be required in actually implementing the plan, though exactly what has not yet been discussed.

Envisioned Next Steps

- 2013-2014: establishment of an advisory group; consultation with representatives of different countries and organisations
- 2015-2016: completion of the first version of the joint plan of polar activities
- 2016-2017: signature of Framework Agreement and start of IPI

Progress

In order to facilitate the concept of an International Polar Initiative (IPI) a Concept Note Steering Group was formed from representatives of AMAP, APECS, EPB-ESF, IASC, IASSA, ICSU, IOC, SCAR, WMO, UoA and UNEP. This group drafted the Concept Note and updates. The Executive Director represented SCAR, but included the rest of the Executive Committee in the discussions.

Discussions on the Concept have been held during several for a, for example at AGU in the US (December 2012), at the EC Panel of Experts on Polar Observations, Research and Services in China (March 2013) and the IASC Council Meeting in Poland (April 2013).

A website for further information has now been set up by the Canadian Polar Commission at <http://internationalpolarinitiative.org> and the latest version (December 2012) of the Concept Note can be downloaded from: http://internationalpolarinitiative.org/IPI_Concept_v.5-21.12.12.pdf

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