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Proposal for a joint SCAR/CEP workshop on further developing the Antarctic protected area system

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Working Paper submitted by Argentina, Australia, Belgium, Chile, China, Czech Republic, France, Germany, Japan, New Zealand, Norway, Russian Federation, United Kingdom, United States, SCAR

Summary

To address priority actions in the CEP Five-Year Work Plan and Climate Change Response Work Programme, the co-authors propose that the CEP supports the convening of a joint SCAR/CEP workshop on further developing the Antarctic protected area system. This paper presents a proposed workshop outline for Members' consideration. The Committee is invited to consider this proposal and, if agreed, to: adopt terms of reference for the workshop; and, to support the establishment of a joint SCAR/CEP steering committee to consult with CEP Members and workshop participants to finalise and communicate the workshop arrangements.

Background

Article 12(g) of the Protocol on Environmental Protection to the Antarctic Treaty (Environmental Protocol) established a role for the Committee for Environmental Protection (CEP) to provide advice and formulate recommendations to the Parties on 'the operation and further elaboration of the Antarctic Protected Area system'. Annex V to the Environmental Protocol provides for the designation of Antarctic Specially Protected Areas (ASPAs) to protect 'outstanding environmental, scientific, historic, aesthetic or wilderness values, any combination of those values, or ongoing or planned scientific research'.

Article 3.2 of Annex V to the Environmental Protocol states that 'Parties shall seek to identify, within a systematic environmental-geographic framework, and to include in the series of Antarctic Specially Protected Areas' (ASPAs), areas with specified characteristics and values'.

The CEP has regularly expressed its desire to move towards a more systematic and holistic approach to the further development of the Antarctic protected areas system. The CEP has recognised the importance of drawing on the best available scientific information to inform its work, and the important role played by the Scientific Committee on Antarctic Research (SCAR) in providing high quality, independent scientific advice. SCAR has a strong interest in, and is actively involved in the development and dissemination of research to enhance the evidence-base to support Antarctic area protection in line with the provisions of Article 3.2 of Annex V.

Outline for a workshop on further developing the Antarctic protected area system

The CEP Five-Year Work Plan¹ and the Climate Change Response Work Programme (CCRWP)² each include priorities related to supporting the further development of the Antarctic protected areas system, and an action to convene during 2018/19 a joint SCAR/CEP workshop on Antarctic biogeography. To give effect to these commitments, the co-authors suggest that the CEP considers the following suggested arrangements for a joint SCAR/CEP workshop on Further Developing the Antarctic Protected Area System.

Workshop aims

The suggested aims of the workshop are:

- to review the current status of the Antarctic protected area system;

¹ CEP XX Final Report, Appendix 1.

² CEP XIX Final Report, Appendix 2.

- to identify available resources relevant to supporting the identification and designation of ASPAs within a systematic environmental-geographical framework; and
- to identify actions that could be taken to support the further development of the Antarctic protected area system in accordance with the provisions of Article 3.2 of Annex V to the Protocol.

Terms of reference

Consistent with the aims outlined above, it is suggested that the workshop terms of reference could include:

1. Review the current status of the Antarctic protected area system

This could involve assessing the status of the current series of ASPAs with regard to the provisions of Article 3.2 of Annex V, and in light of the other provisions of the Environmental Protocol. It is anticipated that this component of the workshop could inform a CEP report to ATCM on the status of the Antarctic protected area system, as identified in the CEP Five-Year Work Plan.

2. Identify information and resources relevant to designating ASPAs within a systematic environmental-geographic framework

This could involve consideration of information and resources relevant to advancing the provisions of Article 3.2 of Annex V. This may include, for example, considering existing classifications and other research available, underway or planned that is relevant to developing the concept of a systematic environmental-geographic framework³, as well as discussion of current and future threats to Antarctic values (e.g. associated with human activities in the area or broader pressures such as climate change).

3. Identify actions that could be taken to support the further development of the Antarctic Protected Areas system

This could involve seeking to identify research and management needs and related actions that could be taken to support the further development of the Antarctic Protected Areas system, taking into account climate change⁴, consistent with the provisions of Article 3.2 of Annex V.

4. Prepare a report for consideration by the CEP

It is suggested that the co-conveners could prepare a workshop report for consideration by the CEP, with any recommendations arising to be agreed by participants during the workshop.

Participation

Participation in the workshop would be open to representatives of CEP Members and Observers, and representatives and experts from relevant SCAR bodies, with total numbers and delegation size to be considered pending identification of a workshop venue. Participation by external experts could be considered, noting that this may have financial implications.

Steering committee

Consistent with the arrangements for past joint CEP workshops, it would be appropriate to establish a steering committee to finalise arrangements and communicate with participants. Such a steering committee may include, for example:

- CEP representatives (e.g. CEP Chair / CEP Vice-Chair(s), SGMP convener, SGCCR convener, other interested CEP representatives as appropriate)
- SCAR representatives (e.g. SCAR President, Chief Officer of the Standing Committee on the Antarctic Treaty System (SCATS), SCAR Executive Director, representatives of relevant SCAR subsidiary groups)

³ For example Antarctic Conservation Biogeographic Regions (ACBRs), Environmental Domains Analysis, Important Bird Areas (IBAs), research on expansion of ice-free areas, SCAR work on geoheritage and geo-conservation, SCAR biodiversity database.

⁴ CCRWP action 2(f) 'Holistic review of existing Protected Areas network and the process for designation of such areas to ensure they take into account climate change impacts and consider how we might respond.'

- Workshop host country representative(s)

Timing and venue

In accordance with actions identified in the CEP Five-Year Work Plan and Climate Change Response Work Program, it is suggested that a 2 to 3 day workshop be held during the 2018/19 CEP intersessional period. Consistent with the approach to recent joint CEP workshops, one option would be to hold the workshop prior to the 2019 CEP meeting in the Czech Republic, tentatively scheduled for early July 2019. An alternative option would be to hold the workshop at another convenient location prior to the 2019 CEP meeting.

Conveners

The workshop could be jointly convened by one or more CEP representatives and one or more SCAR representatives, to be determined.

Recommendations

The co-authors of this paper recommend that the Committee:

- 1) considers the above outline for a proposed joint SCAR/CEP workshop on Further Developing the Antarctic Protected Area System, consistent with actions identified in the CEP Five-Year Work Plan and Climate Change Response Work Plan and, if agreed;
- 2) adopts terms of reference for the workshop; and
- 3) supports the establishment of a joint SCAR/CEP steering committee to consult with CEP Members and workshop participants to finalise and communicate the workshop arrangements.