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Adopting a Strategic Approach to Environmentally Managed Tourism and non-governmental activities in Antarctica

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Working Paper submitted by New Zealand, the United Kingdom, Norway and the Netherlands

Summary

The purpose of this paper is to encourage the ATCM to adopt a forward thinking, pro-active approach to the management of tourism and non-governmental activities in Antarctica, with a view to drafting a work programme to develop a strategic vision for the management of tourism. While the Meeting has in successive discussions continued to recognise the need for a more strategic approach to the management of tourism, this agreement has yet to result in a concrete work programme.

To address this, New Zealand, the United Kingdom, Norway and the Netherlands recommend three levels of action:

1. task the Secretariat to review and summarise all ATCM discussions and papers, relating to the adoption of the 2009 General Principles and subsequently, about all aspects of Antarctic tourism, including identifying outstanding questions and issues on Antarctic tourism. This should include those held during the Competent Authorities Workshop at ATCM XXXVIII. The Secretariat should be requested to report back to ATCM XXXIX (2016).
2. establish an ICG following discussions at ATCM XXXIX (2016) to identify priority questions and develop a draft work programme for consideration at ATCM XL (2017).
3. build the agreed priority questions into the ATCM's multi-year strategic work plan.

Background

In recent years Antarctic Treaty Parties have discussed in detail the expansion of tourism into new sites of Antarctica and the diversification of tourism activities, including the greater development of activity-based tourism. Following the adoption of Resolution 7 (2009) *General Principles of Antarctic Tourism*, Parties have repeatedly agreed that the ATCM should adopt a more strategic approach to the management of tourism and non-governmental activities in Antarctica. However, despite concerted efforts, a concrete work programme has yet to be developed. This risks criticism that the Antarctic Treaty System is not well-positioned to respond to the challenges presented by tourism.

At ATCM XXXIV (Buenos Aires, July 2011) the Netherlands and the United Kingdom jointly submitted WP 21 *Antarctic Tourism: Towards a strategic and pro-active approach via an inventory of outstanding questions*. The Meeting agreed that it was highly desirable to take a more strategic approach to the ATCM's review of tourism policies, identify gaps, and set priorities for future discussion, taking into account existing regulatory instruments and guidelines and implementation thereof (ATCM Final Report, 2011, para.232). The Meeting went on to agree that ATCM XXXV would discuss further work related to tourism and convened the Intersessional Contact Group (ICG) to prepare for the ATCM's review of tourism policies.

In response to this, at ATCM XXXV (Hobart, June 2012) the Netherlands presented WP 27 *Report of the Intersessional Contact Group 'Outstanding Question' on Antarctic Tourism* (ATCM Final Report, 2012, para 210). The five priority questions the ICG identified were on: improving information exchange and cooperation; measuring and managing cumulative impacts of visitation; the merits of regulatory instruments to prevent or regulate the further expansion of tourist activities; the increasing diversity of activities in

Antarctica; and the potential development of regulations in respect of permanent facilities for tourism in Antarctica. The Meeting agreed that the Netherlands would convene an informal contact group working until ATCM XXXVI to prepare for the ATCM's review of tourism policies (ATCM Final Report, 2012, para 233).

At ATCM XXXVI (Brussels, May 2013) the Netherlands presented WP 47 *Report of the Informal Contact Group on the Increasing Diversity of Tourism and other Non-Governmental Activities in Antarctica*. To explore challenges further, the Meeting welcomed Norway's proposal to facilitate intersessional preparations for a discussion on experiences and challenges identified by competent authorities with regard to diverse types of tourism and non-governmental activities (ATCM Final Report, 2013, para 238).

At ATCM XXXVII (Brasilia, May 2014), noting that tourism in Antarctica is rapidly changing in the diversity of activities and range of actors, New Zealand asked the meeting whether Consultative Parties and the Antarctic Treaty System are well placed to deal with the challenges these changes pose. Norway supported the comments made by New Zealand and called for Parties to engage in a more strategic and forward-leading discussion of tourism in Antarctica (ATCM Final Report, 2014, para 249). Following discussions, the Meeting again agreed that the ATCM need to adopt a more strategic approach to the management of tourism and non-governmental activities in Antarctica (ATCM Final Report, 2014, para 251).

Proposal

As identified by the Netherlands in WP 21 (ATCMXXXIV WP 21, 2011, p.4) a pro-active approach to address tourism will provide more clarity on the future of Antarctic tourism. It is clear that a significant amount of very valuable work has already been carried out by Parties identifying outstanding questions on Antarctic tourism. However, despite unanimous calls from the Meeting for the ATCM to take a more strategic approach to tourism and non-governmental activities, little headway has been made on consolidating this work and progressing efforts towards setting priorities for future discussion.

In order to progress our work towards the development of a strategic approach to environmentally managed tourism in Antarctica, New Zealand, the United Kingdom, Norway and the Netherlands propose that the Parties agree to task the Secretariat to review and summarise in a report, discussions held at Meetings relating to outstanding questions on Antarctic tourism, inclusive from 2009 to present, and report back to ATCM XXXIX (2016).

In delivering this work, the Secretariat should produce:

- a summary of outstanding questions and issues highlighted by Parties relating to all aspects of Antarctic tourism, inclusive 2009 to present, including taking into account recommendations of the Committee for Environmental Protection (CEP) Tourism Study (2012) and outcomes from the Competent Authorities Workshop (2015);¹
- a summary of possible actions considered by the Parties over the period, with an indication of any follow-up action taken or proposed; and
- update the CEP's Tourism Study's account of regulatory mechanisms around the management of tourism.

Once the Secretariat has reported on its findings, New Zealand, the United Kingdom, Norway, and the Netherlands propose that the ATCM convenes an ICG following discussions at ATCM XXXIX (2016) to identify priority questions and develop a draft work programme to set priorities for future discussion. Depending on the progression of discussions, Parties may consider a future focused meeting to further develop a strategic vision for the management of tourism.

Recommendations

¹ This review will build off the Secretariat's SP 9 (2014) *Summary of the ATCM discussions and decisions on land-based and adventure tourism*.

It is recommended that the Meeting agrees to:

1. task the Secretariat to review and summarise in a report, discussions and papers relating to the adoption of the 2009 Guiding Principles and subsequently, about all aspects of Antarctic tourism, including identifying outstanding questions and issues on Antarctic tourism. This should include those held during the Competent Authorities Workshop at ATCM XXXVIII. The Secretariat should be requested to report back to ATCM XXXIX (2016).
2. establish an ICG following discussions at ATCM XXXIX (2016) to identify priority questions and develop a draft work programme for consideration at ATCM XL (2017).
3. build the agreed priority questions into the ATCM's multi-year strategic work plan.