



**XLII Antarctic Treaty
Consultative Meeting**
Prague • Czech Republic • 2019

ENG

Agenda Item: ATCM 17, CEP 3
Presented by: Netherlands,
United Kingdom
Original: English
Submitted: 14/5/2019

Antarctic Tourism Workshop, 3-5 April in Rotterdam, The Netherlands: Chair's Summary and Key Recommendations

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Working Paper submitted by the Netherlands and the United Kingdom

Summary

1. ATCM XLI (Final Report, paragraph 87) welcomed an announcement by the Netherlands that it would hold an informal workshop to discuss tourism management during the intersessional period. The Netherlands subsequently convened an organising committee, including representatives from the United Kingdom, United States, New Zealand, France and IAATO. The workshop, co-chaired by Arthur Eijs from the Netherlands and Jane Rumble OBE from the United Kingdom, took place between 3-5 April 2019 in Rotterdam. Representatives from 17 Parties, IAATO, ASOC and a number of invited Antarctic tourism experts participated. This working paper summarises a more detailed co-chairs' report (submitted to ATCM XLII as Information Paper 11) and sets out the key recommendations arising from the workshop for discussion by the ATCM and CEP, as appropriate.

Background

2. The workshop considered recent trends in Antarctic tourism and focused on three key areas related to tourism management: future tourism growth, diversification of tourism activities, and how to enhance compliance. A background paper, produced by Neil Gilbert (NZ) and Kees Bastmeijer (Netherlands), setting out some of the history of ATCM tourism discussions and highlighting some key questions, was circulated in advance to all participants (this paper is also submitted to ATCM XLII as Information Paper 26).

Workshop Discussions

Tourism Growth

3. Discussions around the projected growth of Antarctic tourism were informed by a presentation from IAATO. IAATO had commenced its own discussions on strengthening standards and options for managing pressure on visited sites, including creating incentives for member operators to choose alternative activities to landings.
4. Workshop discussions focused on key concerns relating to the predicted growth of ship operations in particular, including:
 - pressure on visited sites and whether carrying capacities could be identified;
 - expansion of tourism visits to new sites and whether the potential scientific or other potentially unique values could be protected prior to any such visits;
 - how best to design and fund environmental monitoring of tourism sites, and further elaborate the wilderness value;
 - how best to ensure that all visitors comply with ATCM guidelines, both in terms of general conduct ashore, and any site specific guidelines;
 - the potential growth in non-IAATO tourism operations;
 - how to ensure the delivery of Resolution 7(2009) General Principles of Antarctic Tourism, particularly that all tourism organisations be encouraged to provide a focus on enrichment and education of visitors.

5. To help address some of these concerns, a range of ongoing relevant work was highlighted, including the SCAR/IAATO/Monash University systematic conservation planning project, which will be reported to the ATCM separately. SCAR indicated that this work could potentially enable indicative carrying capacities to be developed at both site and regional scale. The workshop also noted that a number of key tourism-related Measures (notably 4(2004) and 15(2009)) were not yet in force, and urged that relevant Parties expedite their ratification processes. Consideration was also given as to how to maximise the effectiveness of other existing management tools, such as site guidelines and area protection measures.

Recommendations on the matter of growth:

6. Workshop participants agreed that the co-chairs should recommend:

a) that the CEP:

- i) works with SCAR to design and propose how to implement an environmental monitoring programme;**
- ii) encourages all Parties to engage in the development of further site-specific visitor guidelines and the regular review of existing ones, with further consideration given to elaborating seasonal considerations in site guidelines; and**
- iii) works with SCAR to further elaborate an understanding of the wilderness values with a view to their practical application and in conjunction to that, supports SCAR research into theoretical carrying capacity.**

b) that the ATCM:

- i) strongly encourages those Parties that have yet to do so to expedite the approval of Antarctic Tourism regulations, notably Measure 4(2004) and Measure 15(2009);**
- ii) works with COMNAP, SCAR and IAATO, and on the basis of advice from the CEP, to ensure that guidelines relating to conduct of visitors ashore are in line with current best practice and presented in a format appropriate for all visitors, and that the guidelines are easily identifiable on the ATS website; and**
- iii) explores the idea of levying an administrative fee on tourism operators to support environmental monitoring work, including through considering parallels with the administrative fees levied by CCAMLR on fishing operators.**

Diversification of Activities undertaken by tourists in Antarctica

7. Workshop participants acknowledged that the range of activities is now extremely extensive and there is no clear repository of information about all the types of activities that have already been undertaken. Some activities are not uniformly described and this further hampered data collection. Different Competent Authorities would authorise certain activities differently. Many Parties currently lack the legal basis on which to refuse specific activities. Concerns ranged from the proliferation of once novel activities across many operators, giving concerns about safety and cumulative impacts, to the challenges of being able to adequately identify and assess potential impacts.
8. Discussions included consideration of the desirability of being able to simply prohibit certain activities from Antarctica, either on the basis of considerable safety and environmental concerns or based on value considerations, e.g. taking into account the wilderness value. Heli-skiing and jet-skiing were two of the activities mentioned in this regard. One alternative option discussed was an assessment by the ATCM/CEP of activities for which no current guidelines exist, so that a harmonised consideration of the activity could take place. It would need to be very clear that this should not be taken as blanket approval or acceptance of such activities. It was also discussed how to apply these standards to all persons in Antarctica.
9. It was noted that, in the past, the ATCM has discussed the need to prohibit or regulate the establishment of permanent facilities for tourism in Antarctica without reaching consensus and that it would be important to revisit this issue.

10. IAATO offered to produce an Information Paper setting out clearer definitions of the activities undertaken by their members to aid data collection and assessment. IAATO also offered to continue to share and promote their activity-specific industry best practice guidelines to the ATCM. The US and Canada offered to share further information about the work they have been doing to coordinate and develop more consistency of standards across Competent Authorities in relation to coastal camping.

Recommendations on the matter of diversification:

11. Workshop participants agreed that the co-chairs should recommend:

- c) **that the CEP:**
 - i) **develops a framework for conducting pre-assessments relating to new, novel or particularly concerning activities. Heli-skiing might provide for a useful case study;**
 - ii) **ensures that site guidelines are as specific as possible in terms of which activities are permitted or not at each site; and**
 - iii) **revises and strengthens the general guidelines for visitors (Resolution 3 (2001)).**
- d) **that the ATCM:**
 - i) **develops a framework to underpin greater consistency of standards between Competent Authorities in assessing the potential safety and environmental implications of new or novel activities.**

Compliance with existing tourism rules and regulations

12. Workshop discussions focused on the differences in implementation of existing rules, including surveillance and enforcement, and how to better harmonise standards; questions of jurisdiction over authorisations, including where multiple operators from different Parties were involved; and how to facilitate more effective engagement and dialogue between Competent Authorities. Standards of vessel and aviation operations were also raised. It was also agreed that the issue of land-based tourism infrastructure, and the extent to which current operations complied with existing Resolutions (including, for example, Resolution 5(2007)), should remain a focus for the CEP and ATCM at future meetings.
13. The workshop recognised the potential of an international tourism observer scheme. The CCAMLR System of Scientific Observation, which provides for an overall framework, under which countries agree bilaterally to designate and receive observers, might provide a useful comparator; IAATO offered to provide information and potential collaboration with their internal observer programme.
14. France indicated it was preparing a proposal on how to best collate all existing ATCM instruments pertaining to tourism activities.
15. Use of the Antarctic Treaty formal inspection process in relation to tourism activities was also discussed, along with some of the previous proposals submitted to past ATCMs around creating a ‘black-list’ of unauthorised yachts and vessels, and how to hold Treaty Party nationals to account if they knowingly participate on unauthorised expeditions. Enhancing the cooperation and engagement between Competent Authorities, including around information sharing and better coordination in authorising activities, was a major focus.

Recommendations on the matter of compliance:

16. In addition to the proposals mentioned above, workshop participants agreed that the co-chairs should recommend:

- e) **that the ATCM:**

- i) invites Parties to identify a working level Competent Authority contact, in addition to the senior responsible official;**
- ii) develops Terms of Reference for enhanced engagement between Competent Authorities, establishing an ongoing subsidiary group;**
- iii) develops a proposal for an international tourism observer scheme, building on national experiences and IAATO's model;**
- iv) continues to reach out to non-Consultative Parties whose operators or nationals engage in Antarctic tourism activities;**
- v) continues to encourage all Parties to ensure they regularly update the EIES on which tourism and non-governmental activities they have authorised and asks the Secretariat to ensure that this information is made clearer and more obviously locatable on their website;**
- vi) encourages Parties to include inspections of tourism activities within existing inspection regimes; and**
- vii) asks Working Group 1 to provide advice on how those operating in Antarctica can most effectively gather and share evidence of suspected non-compliance.**