

## **Reporting on the State of the Antarctic Environment:**

### **The SCAR view**

#### **Working Paper submitted to CEP II, Agenda Item 7**

SCAR wishes to express its appreciation of Dr Anders Modig's efforts to coordinate the work of the intersessional open-ended contact group considering the need for, and the development of, a State of the Antarctic Environment Report (SAER). SCAR is also grateful for being included in the electronic distribution of the papers relating to this work. SCAR has followed carefully the various arguments presented and wishes to make the following comments.

SCAR considers these are good scientific reasons for undertaking some form of synthesis of available data on the Antarctic continent and the Southern Ocean. It is also one way of meeting the Protocol requirement that the Committee for Environmental Protection provide advice on the state of the Antarctic environment.

The intersessional group appears to have largely reached agreement that the audience should be "decision- and policy-makers, including governments and the CEP". SCAR agrees with that.

It is clear from experience elsewhere that a comprehensive synthesis of all available data will be a major undertaking and one that could not be accomplished quickly. However, an overview of a range of key indicators is a realistic proposition, especially if resources are available to support a small group dedicated to the task. SCAR suggests that the level of synthesis shown in the Arctic SAER is adequate, although more extensive and longer term work is probably justified in some fields. These fields will be determined by the synthesis.

SCAR agrees with the five "Discussed Objectives" listed in the Working Paper by the Intersessional Open-ended Contact Group.

Scientifically it would not be sensible to use the Treaty area boundary for any synthesis since this does not accord with any physical or biological feature. SCAR remains convinced that the Polar Front is the most scientifically acceptable boundary.

There is still clearly some disagreement on the need for an SAER and on the value and practical uses of the product. SCAR believes that an interim synthesis, as suggested in intersessional discussions, would be unlikely to be helpful. On scientific grounds SCAR continues to believe in the value of a continent-wide synthesis and SCAR would be willing to assist in the compilation of such a synthesis but this must be adequately resourced.

From much experience SCAR suggests that, should it be agreed to proceed with an SAER, it is unlikely that any definitive review or assessment could be achieved by a loosely coordinated intersessional group with no fixed membership. SCAR considers that to achieve even the limited objectives proposed it is essential to agree a task force with a defined membership, objectives, time-scale, deliverables and resources.

## **Proposal**

It seems clear from the inter-sessional discussions that for some Parties there continues to be a lack of evidence on which to base a decision on whether or not to proceed with an SAER. SCAR suggests that one way forward might be for SCAR to be asked to produce a paper describing the key environmental variables that need to be considered and why; suggest present and future threats to the Antarctic environment; and indicate how these link with state of the environment reports for other parts of the world.