

## ANNUAL EXCHANGE OF INFORMATION

### **Summary**

Parties to the Antarctic Treaty, and members of COMNAP and SCAR, exchange annual reports following prescribed content, format, and deadline. Much of the content of the three reports is the same. Content and format were specified years ago, before the World Wide Web was used widely for information exchange. There are also requirements to exchange information under the Protocol on Environmental Protection to the Antarctic Treaty. This working paper suggests that Treaty Parties adopt a reporting format that is Web-based and amenable to the needs of the reporting requirements for Treaty and Protocol Parties and for COMNAP and SCAR. Managers of the National Antarctic Programs would prepare the reports and place them on their Web sites. Web sites now maintained by the ATCM, COMNAP, and SCAR could list the national Web sites containing the reports. Advantages of shifting to the Web and adopting a common format will be reduced effort, reduced cost, improved timeliness, and easier access for users.

### **Recent actions leading to this paper**

An Information Paper<sup>i</sup> and the Final Report<sup>ii</sup> of ATCM XXII (1998) encourage each Treaty Party to identify and use a WWW site for its annual exchange and to collaborate with SCAR on preparation of SCAR annual reports for the Web. The Final Report states that “exchange of information would be a priority item on the agenda of ATCM XXIII”.

The ATCM XXII Final Report states the “need to rationalize the information exchange system and that consideration should be given to what information is exchanged and why, as well as how the process could be improved. SCAR and COMNAP informed the Meeting that they were both intending to review their information exchange formats.”

ATCM XXII Resolution 5(1998) calls for the establishment of an ATCM home page<sup>iii</sup> to be maintained by the host government of the following year’s ATCM.

The 1998 meeting of SCAR<sup>iv</sup> states that annual report amalgamation, in addition to Treaty and SCAR reports, “should logically also include the COMNAP annual exchange of information.”

### **Progress**

The ATCM, COMNAP, and SCAR have Web sites.<sup>v</sup>

All national Antarctic offices are believed to have electronic mail capability and access to the Internet, and at least 14 offices have Internet sites.

At least three Treaty Parties posed their 1998 Antarctic Treaty information exchanges on the Web. For example, the United States posting is on the National Science Foundation Web site.<sup>vi</sup> The U.S. Department of State circulated a diplomatic note to the other Antarctic Treaty nations advising of this posting. Paper copies of the U.S. Annual Exchange of Information, though available upon request, were not circulated.

The COMNAP advance exchange of operational information currently is done electronically, by e-mail.

## **Discussion**

Improving annual information exchange has been discussed at least since ATCM XVI (1991), whose report notes the task is a burden, information may not reach those who need it, and some of it is too late to be useful.<sup>vii</sup> The 1991 discussion recognized the potential for duplication of some information exchanged noting that COMNAP/SCALOP exchange focused on logistics; and SCAR, on science.

The annual reports required by the Antarctic Treaty,<sup>viii</sup> COMNAP,<sup>ix</sup> and SCAR<sup>x</sup> and the Protocol are susceptible to improvement because of overlap: overlap of the originators of the information, overlap of the content of the reports (table 1), and overlap of the users. The World Wide Web makes it feasible to issue all the Antarctic information required for the reports, but not publish the material electronically just once.

For example, in the United States the process is unfolding this way:

- The National Science Foundation (NSF) placed the U.S. annual exchange of Antarctic Treaty information on its Web site on 30 November 1998.
- NSF is working with the Polar Research Board, National Academy of Sciences, which represents the United States on SCAR, to establish links from the Academy's Web site to those categories of information on the NSF site that are required for the SCAR annual report. Persons requiring the U.S. SCAR report will read it on the Academy Web site, in effect seeing a SCAR report format even though the information is on the NSF site and originally was posted as a Treaty report.
- By 1 September NSF can post on its Web site the information required by COMNAP for the 1999-2000 season.

To make it easier for users to access the reports of every reporting country, it is suggested that the ATCM, SCAR, and COMNAP Web sites establish links from a list of countries to each country's site.

Best use of efficiencies offered by the Web would assist in the posting of needed information once, as soon as it is available, rather than on the preparation of reports in specified formats.

The U.S. National Science Foundation and U.S. National Science Foundation and the U.S. National Academy of Sciences would offer to share the use of design and other parameters of their Antarctic information exchange sites, upon request.

### Recommended action

1. Parties shift from paper to electronic publication of the annual exchange of information under the Antarctic Treaty.
2. Parties include, as part of their annual exchange of information under the Treaty, information that must be exchanged under the Protocol.
3. ATCM XXIII encourages SCAR and COMNAP to consider a shift from paper to electronic publication of annual exchanges.
4. ATCM WWW home page should list locations of national annual reports, SCAR and COMNAP home pages might provide similar lists on their home pages.

**Table 1. Comparison of subjects and due dates, annual international Antarctic reports.**

COMNAP (due 1 Sep)	Antarctic Treaty (30 Nov)	SCAR (1 Jun, yr+1)
2. Shipping 3. Air operations	I. Ships, aircraft, vehicles	
	II. Expedition dates	
4. Stations	III. Station locations and dates	2. Wintering stations, lat., long.
1. Contact information 9. Emergency contacts	IV. Names and functions of personnel	1. Addresses of SCAR committee, operating agency
	V. Armaments	
7. Major field activities 8. Other activities	VI. Program of work and science, and where	4. Automatic observatories, stations 5. Project descriptions 6. Planned new programs
	VII. Scientific equipment	
5. Communications	VIII. Transportation and communication	
6. Logistics affecting other nations	IX. Facilities for rendering assistance	
	X. Nongovernment expeditions	
	XI. Unoccupied refuges	
	XII. Numbers of species killed or captured	
	XIII. Radioisotopes used	
	XIV. Research rockets used	
	XV. Oceanic research	
	XVI. NGA station visits	

## Glossary

ATCM	Antarctic Treaty Consultative Meeting
COMNAP	Council of Managers of National Antarctic Programs
ICSU	International Council for Science ( <a href="http://www.icsu.org/">http://www.icsu.org/</a> )
NGA	Nongovernmental activity
SCALOP	Standing Committee on Antarctic Logistics and Operations
SCAR	Scientific Committee on Antarctic Research of ICSU
Web	World Wide Web on the Internet
WWW	World Wide Web on the Internet

---

<sup>i</sup> XXII ATCM information paper 28, improving annual exchange of Antarctic information – facilitating information exchange (May 1998)

<sup>ii</sup> XXII ATCM final report, item 14, operational issues, paragraphs 115 and 116 (June 1998)

<sup>iii</sup> XXII ATCM resolution 5, ATCM home page (June 1998)

<sup>iv</sup> XXV SCAR item 7.1.5, review of national reports to SCAR (July 1998)

<sup>v</sup> ATCM: <http://www.antartica-rcta.com.pe>  
SCAR: <http://www.scar.org/>  
COMNAP: <http://www.delm.tas.gov.au/comnap/>

<sup>vi</sup> <http://www.nsf.gov/od/opp/antarct/treaty/index.htm>

<sup>vii</sup> XVI ATCM final report, paragraph 53. XVI ATCM/WP42

<sup>viii</sup> Treaty Article III states, “information regarding plans for scientific programs in Antarctica shall be exchanged to permit maximum economy and efficiency of operations.” Article VII obliges parties to give advance notice of expeditions, stations, and military. Recommendation VIII-6 (1975) prescribes the format and says the information should be exchanged “as early as possible but in no case later than 30 November.”

<sup>ix</sup> COMNAP/SCALOP requests advance information of aircraft and ship operations to help coordinate activities and share resources where appropriate.

<sup>x</sup> SCAR (Circular 669, 1995) maintains an annual exchange of information to keep members informed of the current status of Antarctic research.