



XLIV ANTARCTIC TREATY CONSULTATIVE MEETING

BERLIN, 23 May – 2 June 2022

HOST COUNTRY COMMUNIQUÉ

From 22 May to 2 June, 2022, Germany was the host state to the XLIV Antarctic Treaty Consultative Meeting (ATCM) as well as the XXIV meeting of the Committee for Environmental Protection (CEP), bringing together the 54 States Party to the Antarctic Treaty, as well as Observers and Experts. The meetings took place in Berlin and were held, for the first time, in hybrid format. Ms. Tania von Uslar-Gleichen, Director of International Law at the Federal Foreign Office, served as Chair of ATCM XLIV. The CEP was chaired by Ms. Birgit Njåstad (Norway).

A total of 448 delegates were registered for the ATCM XLIV, 104 participated virtually.

Ms Jennifer Lee Morgan, State Secretary and Special Envoy for International Climate Action at the Federal Foreign Office, and Dr Bettina Hoffmann, Parliamentary State Secretary at the Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation, Nuclear Safety and Consumer Protection, officially opened the conference, both condemning in the strongest possible terms Russia's unjustifiable, unprovoked and illegal war of one consultative state against another. They called on Russia to put an end to the war against Ukraine, noting that this breach of international law was also contrary to the spirit of the Antarctic Treaty. Ukraine presented an Information Paper on the consequences of the military aggression against its country for its Antarctic Program. The overwhelming majority of the Parties expressed their solidarity with Ukraine and aligned themselves with the condemnation of the Russian aggression.

Many Parties stressed that the ATCM's work for peace, research and environmental protection should not be compromised by the military aggression of one Party against another. The Antarctic Treaty has long been seen as an example of successful international cooperation for the benefit of humanity, and to fight against the global crises of climate change, biodiversity loss and pollution. The fact that the Meeting was able to adopt Measures, Resolutions and Decisions in consensus shows the strength and resilience of the Antarctic Treaty System.

In accordance with its theme "From Science via Policy to Protection", the ATCM stressed the importance of research in Antarctica in order to take the right political decisions on how to protect it. In this vein, the meeting considered the decadal synopsis report "Antarctic Climate Change and the Environment" by the Scientific Committee on Antarctic Research as the best available science and acknowledged the advice that urgent action is required to prevent irreversible loss of Antarctic values and consequences for the planet. All parties agreed that the ATCM has an important role in addressing the threat of global climate change, and decided to focus even more on the subject at the next ATCM.

Over the years, 75 areas across the white continent have been designated as Antarctic Specially Protected Areas at the Consultative Meetings. At ATCM XLIV, the management of seventeen of these areas has undergone a review and revision. Four new protected areas will be added in the future, as the ATCM endorsed the next steps for their special protection.

In addition the Meeting focused on a specific species: the emperor penguin. The world's largest penguin is increasingly at risk, in particular because of global warming. An overwhelming majority of Parties held the opinion that there is sufficient scientific evidence for the species to be put under the special protection of the Protocol on Environmental Protection. While a formal decision on Special Protection Status was blocked by one party, most Parties indicated that they would nonetheless implement the draft action plan that had been developed intersessionally on a national basis.

The Meeting also discussed the issue of the growing tourism to Antarctica, with the forecast that the total number of visitors to Antarctica would exceed 100.000 in the 2022-2023 season. The sharp rise in interest around the world, especially in Antarctic cruises, is increasing the pressure on those Antarctic regions in particular that are already hit hard by climate change. The Parties agreed that a precautionary approach should aim at the development of a strategic and coordinated approach towards the sustainable management of tourism to Antarctica.

The CEP emphasized the importance of its Climate Change Response Work Programme (CCRWP) and showed its results. Outstanding among these is the collaboration of organizations working in Antarctica to address global issues to protect the Antarctic environment and the associated and dependent ecosystems. Engaged discussions were held on improving the system of environmental impact assessments for all activities in Antarctica. The Committee agreed on several aspects that will be addressed intersessionally to enhance the effectiveness of the environmental assessment system even more. The CEP also gave special attention to the dangers of chemical contamination and the introduction of plastics into the Antarctic ecosystem.

The ATCM highlighted the importance of ensuring that everyone working in Antarctica is safe, welcome, respected and free from discrimination. Participants affirmed their commitment to enhancing diversity and promoting an inclusive culture for everyone contributing to the work of the Antarctic Treaty system.

In accordance with Parties' commitment to protect the Antarctic environment, ATCM XLIV was organized in accordance with the Federal Government's "Guidelines for the Sustainable Organization of Events" to minimize the impact on the environment, such as paper consumption, minimization of waste and carbon offset.

Parties discussed a request from Canada for Consultative Status. Though widespread support was declared, two parties were not ready to decide on Canada's application at this meeting. The request will therefore be discussed again at ATCM 45, which will take place in Helsinki from 29 May to 8 June.