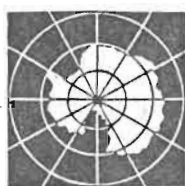


TRATADO ANTARTICO
REUNION CONSULTIVA ESPECIAL

TRAITÉ SUR L'ANTARCTIQUE,
REUNION CONSULTATIVE SPÉCIALE



ANTARCTIC TREATY

XI th SPECIAL CONSULTATIVE MEETING

ДОГОВОР ОБ АНТАРКТИКЕ

XI СПЕЦИАЛЬНОЕ КОНСУЛЬТАТИВНОЕ СОВЕЩАНИЕ

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AUSTRALIA

11TH SPECIAL ANTARCTIC TREATY CONSULTATIVE MEETING
VIÑA DEL MAR, CHILE, 1990

Opening statement by Alan Brown
Leader of the Australian Delegation

The Australian delegation is pleased to participate in the Eleventh Special Consultative Meeting being held in Chile. Australia welcomed the adoption at the Paris ATCM of Recommendation XV-1 which established the terms of reference for this Special Consultative Meeting. Australia will work with vigour to seek the early establishment of comprehensive measures for the protection of the Antarctic environment. With this aim in mind, Australia has joined with France, Italy and Belgium in presenting an indicative draft convention to establish a comprehensive environment protection regime.

Australia hopes that the present Meeting will provide an opportunity for a frank and open discussion of the essential elements to include in such a regime. This Special Consultative Meeting is especially timely since it demonstrates to the world community that the Treaty Parties have the capacity and the intention to develop practical and effective measures for the protection of the Antarctic environment. Australia believes that it is essential that the development of such a regime should take place within the Antarctic Treaty system and that the eventual adoption of an effective regime will enhance the Treaty and its standing with the international community.

Australia proposes that Antarctica be designated as a "Nature Reserve - Land of Science" which will preserve the environmental qualities of the continent while continuing to encourage scientific research, which depends so much on these qualities. In Australia's view, the new regime should be closely linked to the Antarctic Treaty and preserve the essential decision making function of ATCMs. It should lay down standards for human activities in the region, establish a basis for the assessment of environmental impacts, provide for compliance procedures and make appropriate institutional arrangements. Australia believes that these objectives are achievable within a system which keeps implementation largely within the responsibility of national governments and operators.

Australia will also be presenting its views on other matters to be covered at this Special Consultative Meeting, including the review of existing environmental measures. The Antarctic Treaty Parties can point to many achievements made in the field of environment protection, but it is now

necessary to consider the introduction of new arrangements to ensure that environmental protection, is dealt with in a comprehensive way.

While this protection must be based on a co-ordinated and integrated approach by the Treaty Parties, national capacities should be used as much as possible, particularly where activities involving relatively low impact are concerned. National authorities will also have to take responsibility for activities likely to have a higher environmental impact, although in this case some mechanism may be established to review national assessments. It will also be necessary to prohibit some activities which can be seen as potentially having a seriously detrimental effect on the environment. These include those activities already prohibited by the Antarctic Treaty and, in Australia's view, minerals activities other than scientific research. Australia's view that such minerals activities should be banned is unambiguous and has been restated clearly and repeatedly by Australian leaders.

Australia is committed to ensuring that in developing an instrument for the comprehensive protection of the Antarctic environment science shall continue to be the most important use of the region. This is reflected in the proposal to designate the Antarctic as a "Land of Science". The indicative draft convention that we are promoting with France, Belgium and Italy gives priority to science and a specific role for SCAR. Australia and France are circulating an information paper which demonstrates that the proposals are consistent with Article II of the Treaty which guarantees freedom of scientific research in Antarctica. The paper also demonstrates that the obligations on Parties for the assessment of the environmental impacts of their scientific activities do not go beyond those already agreed to by the Consultative Parties.

Australia wishes to work in a co-operative way with all the other participants in this Special Consultative Meeting. The subject to be dealt with is very wide but early action is required to ensure the protection of the Antarctic environment and to reassure the world community of the capacity of the Treaty system to deal effectively with this issue. It is Australia's view that this Meeting should establish the basis for the Treaty Parties to commence the negotiation of a new legally binding agreement, within the Treaty system, to establish a comprehensive regime for the protection of the Antarctic environment. We hope that common ground will emerge during the meeting which will make it possible for rapid progress to be made in negotiating such a new instrument.