

Introduction

This Committee for Environmental Protection (CEP) Handbook is a compilation of key references, for use by CEP representatives when attending meetings or undertaking CEP-related work. It contains the Antarctic Treaty System instruments that guide the Committee's work, copies of procedures and approved guidelines that explain how the CEP conducts its business, other documents the CEP has produced or endorsed to help Treaty Parties protect the Antarctic environment, plus links to other useful references.

This central resource is intended to assist CEP representatives to actively participate in the work of the Committee, but there are other sources of useful information. Most CEP-related documents, including this Handbook, are currently accessible via the CEP website (www.cep.aq). At the IX CEP Meeting the Antarctic Treaty Secretariat took the responsibility for maintaining and updating the Handbook with assistance of Members, as appropriate.

Representatives should feel free to contact other Committee members to seek advice regarding CEP matters – a list of email addresses for all National Contact Points is available at http://www.ats.aq/devAS/cep_authorities.aspx. The CEP Chairperson, Mr Ewan McIvor, from Australia, is also very happy to respond to queries, and can be contacted at ewan.mcivor@aad.gov.au.

The Committee for Environmental Protection

Environmental protection has always been a central theme of the cooperation between the Antarctic Treaty Parties. On 4 October 1991 this culminated in the signing of the Protocol on Environmental Protection to the Antarctic Treaty (the Protocol), which, amongst other things, establishes the Committee for Environmental Protection (CEP). The Protocol designates the Antarctic Treaty Area as 'a natural reserve, devoted to peace and science', and provides a framework for the 'comprehensive protection of the Antarctic environment and dependent and associated ecosystems'. The six annexes to the Protocol are an integral component of this framework: Annex 1 outlines procedures for environmental impact assessment of all activities; Annex II establishes rules for the protection of Antarctic Flora and Fauna; Annex III deals with the management and disposal of wastes; Annex IV details measures for the prevention of marine pollution; Annex V describes a framework for the designation and management of special Antarctic areas; and Annex VI – when it enters into force – will establish a framework for liability arising from environmental emergencies.

CEP Meetings

The Protocol entered into force on 14 January 1998 following ratification by all Antarctic Treaty Consultative Parties. The first CEP meeting was held in Tromsø, Norway, in May of that year. The CEP normally meets once a year in conjunction with the ATCM, but it can also meet at other times as necessary to carry out its functions. The CEP Chair presents the Final Report of the CEP meeting to the Antarctic Treaty Consultative Meeting (ATCM). CEP Members submit Working Papers and Information Papers to the meetings and these documents constitute the basis of the Committee's discussions. The CEP Rules of Procedure also allow for the establishment of Intersessional Contact Groups (ICG) to undertake more complex or time-consuming work that cannot be completed during the five-day CEP meetings. Several ICGs usually operate between the annual meetings and report back to the CEP with findings and recommendations.

Functions of the CEP

The CEP provides advice and formulates recommendations to the ATCM, in connection with the implementation of the Protocol. As outlined in Article 12 of the Protocol, the CEP provides advice on:

- a) the effectiveness of measures taken pursuant to the Protocol;*
- b) the need to update, strengthen or otherwise improve such measures;*
- c) the need for additional measures, including the need for additional Annexes, where appropriate;*
- d) the application and implementation of the environmental impact assessment procedures;*
- e) means of minimising or mitigating environmental impacts of activities in the Antarctic Treaty area;*
- f) procedures for situations requiring urgent action, including response action in environmental emergencies;*
- g) the operation and further elaboration of the Antarctic Protected Area system;*
- h) inspection procedures, including formats for inspection reports and checklists for the conduct of inspections;*
- i) the collection, archiving, exchange and evaluation of information related to environmental protection;*
- j) the state of the Antarctic environment; and*
- k) the need for scientific research, including environmental monitoring, related to the implementation of this Protocol.*

In carrying out its functions, the Committee consults with the Scientific Committee on Antarctic Research (SCAR), the Council of Managers of national Antarctic Programs, the Scientific Committee for the Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources (CCAMLR) and other relevant scientific, environmental and technical organisations.