



XXXVIII ANTARCTIC TREATY CONSULTATIVE MEETING SOFIA 2015

HOST COUNTRY COMMUNIQUE

The XXXVIII Antarctic Treaty Consultative Meeting (ATCM) and the XVIII Meeting of the Committee on Environmental Protection (CEP) were held in Sofia, Bulgaria from 1 to 10 June 2015. The Meetings were held under the patronage of the President of the Republic of Bulgaria and were jointly organized by the Bulgarian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Bulgarian Antarctic Institute.

Over 400 participants from the Antarctic Treaty Parties, experts, representatives of civil society and international observers attended the Meeting with the common goal to reaffirm their commitment to preserve the uniqueness of Antarctica as a natural reserve devoted to peace, scientific research and international cooperation. The Meeting welcomed Mongolia and Kazakhstan as parties to the Antarctic Treaty, taking to 52 the number of Parties and the accession of Portugal and Venezuela to the Protocol for Environmental Protection bringing the number of Parties to 37.

The following outcomes were among the highlights of this year Meeting.

The ATCM continued to focus on enhancing the understanding of the implications of global climate change for Antarctica, promoting scientific research and consolidating the culture of international collaboration. Addressing future environmental, management and operational challenges by further enhancing the internationally agreed framework for managing Antarctica was at the core of the Meeting's agenda. There was a substantive exchange of information on globally significant science activities conducted in Antarctica.

Promoting broader Antarctic cooperation remained at the center of discussions with the aim of facilitating more efficient and substantive exchange on Antarctic cooperation including strengthening the interaction between the ATCM and the CEP. The Meeting updated the guiding principles for the implementation and development of the Multi-Year Strategic Plan for the ATCM outlining the priorities for the next Meeting.

Tourism continued to be a particular point of attention. Special emphasis was put on the importance of addressing the environmental aspects and the impact of tourism in Antarctica by working towards a strategic approach to environmentally managed tourism and non-governmental activities. Related discussions with a focus on competent authorities were conducted in the Special Working Group on Competent Authorities.



The following topics were at the core of discussions in the CEP: wise management of Antarctica by making best available science readily accessible via the Environments Portal; identifying steps to better understand and address the implications of climate change for the protection of the Antarctic environment and review of the Guidelines for Environmental Impact Assessment in Antarctica. The Parties also discussed updates and improved arrangements for 17 Antarctic Protected Areas.

The Meeting held a full day Workshop on Education and Outreach Activities.

Consistent with the Parties' commitment to protect the Antarctic environment, host country arrangements for the ATCM included actions to reduce its environmental impact, such as paper and waste minimization.

Parties expressed their gratitude to the Bulgarian government and their appreciation for the excellent facilities provided for the Meeting.

The next ATCM will be hosted by Chile, tentatively from 6 to 15 June 2016.