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CONSULTATIVE MEETING
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Report of the International Association of Antarctica Tour Operators 2017-18

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Under Article III (2) of the Antarctic Treaty

Introduction

The International Association of Antarctica Tour Operators (IAATO) is pleased to report its activities to ATCM XL, under Article III (2) of the Antarctic Treaty.

IAATO continues to focus activities in support of its mission statement to advocate and promote the practice of safe and environmentally responsible private sector travel to Antarctica by ensuring:

- Effective day-to-day management of member activities in Antarctica;
- Educational outreach, including scientific collaboration; and
- Development and promotion of Antarctic tourism best practices.

A detailed description of IAATO, its mission statement, primary activities and recent developments can be found at: www.iaato.org.

IAATO Membership and Visitor Levels during 2017-18

IAATO comprises 107 Operators and Associates, representing businesses from 66% of the Antarctic Treaty Consultative Party countries. IAATO Operators carry nationals from nearly all Treaty Parties annually to Antarctica, and nationals from a further 50 non-Treaty Party countries. Since 2010, IAATO has represented all passenger vessels operating in Antarctic waters under the International Convention for the Safety of Life at Sea (SOLAS), with only two exceptions; Japanese operated cruise-only vessel ASUKA II during the 2015-16 season and Japanese operated cruise-only vessel OCEAN DREAM in 2016-17.

During the 2017-18 Antarctic tourism season, the total number of visitors travelling with IAATO Operators was 51,707 representing an increase of 17% compared to the previous season. This figure represents a new high, having passed the previous peak of the 2007–8 season (46,265).

Details on tourism statistics including activities and nationalities can be found in ATCM XLI / IP71 *IAATO Overview of Antarctic Tourism: 2017-18 Season and Preliminary Estimates for 2018-19*. The Membership Directory and additional statistics on IAATO member activities can be found at www.iaato.org.

Recent Work and Activities

Several initiatives were undertaken during the year, focusing on strengthening systems in support of managing activities for growth:

- In July 2017, SCAR and IAATO initiated a two-year collaborative research project to develop a Systematic Conservation Plan for the Antarctic Peninsula. Led by Prof. Stephen Chown of the University of Monash (and SCAR President), the project aims to provide data and scenarios to inform the sustainable management of tourism. A project description can be found in ATCM40_IP166.
- In October 2017, the IAATO Tourism Growth Working Group, IAATO Executive Committee and representatives of almost all IAATO operator companies met in Marseille, France for a three-day workshop to build on the strategic approach to manage for anticipated growth previously developed in

2016-17. Workshop results were refined into four themed components of a multi-tasked growth action plan, subsequently approved at IAATO's 2018 Annual Meeting.

- IAATO continues to invest in the assessment of field staff, recognising the importance of their role in enforcing Treaty agreements and IAATO standards and guidelines. Specifically:
 - 1,053 field staff passed the IAATO online Field Staff Assessment and Certification Programme for the 2017-18 season, a 20% increase on last season. Certification is mandatory for many IAATO Operators; and 1,778 field staff have passed since 2012–13.
 - The IAATO Field Operations Manual is currently under major re-development for the 2018/19 season and incorporates relevant updates from ATCM and CEP agreements.
 - Additional IAATO online assessments have been approved in the IAATO 2018 annual meeting to be developed during 2018 for ship's crew and administration personnel.
 - In September 2017, IAATO, in conjunction with the Association of Arctic Expedition Cruise Operators (AECO), held the second combined Field Staff Conference, in Iceland. The four-day event included participation of 90 polar field staff (expedition leaders / operation managers). The event's success will be built upon in the next planned Field staff conference in 2019.
- Educating members, their field staff and clients about Antarctic science and conservation issues is an important component of IAATO's work. During the 2017/18 season IAATO has:
 - launched a smart phone App ("IAATO Polar Guide: Antarctica") for IOS and Android. The free app is designed to work offline, providing a "one-stop shop" of Treaty guidance, vessel management, visitor guidelines on sites, biosecurity and wildlife. Feedback has been very positive and the app is currently being upgraded with additional functionality and an improved user interface; for all Antarctic professionals and visitors.
 - Expanded the IAATO Antarctic Ambassador initiative on social media platforms, supported by the IAATO secretariat's new digital media specialist;
 - Developed a communications package for informing marketing departments, staff and agents on IAATO and Treaty system requirements
 - Increased participation in citizen science projects, including collaboration with a number of research groups and National Antarctic Programs (NAP);
 - Increased the number of key documents and guidelines translated into different languages and further improved the translations used in IAATO's animated films (Tagalog, for crew)
- IAATO annually receives many enquiries from individuals, yachts and private groups who are at various stages of planning expeditions to Antarctica. IAATO explains the Antarctic Treaty System and permitting/authorization process to all of these and passes information to a relevant Competent Authority.
- Efforts to strengthen shipping safety in the region remain a priority within the organization; including:
 - IAATO funded the purchase of three OLEX units for use by yachts; in order to expand the scope of crowd-sourcing of hydrographic data made available to Hydrographic Offices and research groups as requested.
 - The Implementation of the IMO Code for ships operating in Polar Waters on 1st of January 2018 has driven continued support work for operators' implementation. Working with POLARVIEW and the International Association of Classification Societies (IACS) IAATO is supporting the development of tools required to implement the Code's requirements, including a database of ice and temperature information to support operator's risk assessments and Risk Index Systems.
 - IAATO undertook a Search and Rescue Exercise with MRCC Argentina in March 2018 and attended the third annual Arctic Search and Rescue Workshop/table top exercise in Iceland in April 2018. These initiatives are important in building relationships, trust and understanding.

- IAATO Deep Field operators worked with COMNAP and AFF (US Automated Flight Following) to improve air safety.
 - The majority of Deep Field operators' intercontinental and internal Antarctic flights were added to and tracked through the AFF system, allowing real-time visibility of flight activity on the AFF site.

IAATO Meeting and Participation at Other Meetings during 2017-18

IAATO's 2018 Annual Meeting took place 1-3 May, 2018 in Newport, Rhode Island, USA. In addition to the above-mentioned initiatives, the meeting included:

- Focused discussions on Managing for Growth initiatives in support of the Association's mission statement;
- Introduction of a suite of whistle-blower policies, including two bespoke "care and concern" policies to facilitate the sharing of any concerns of field staff and visitors who feel that any operation has fallen short of Treaty and/or IAATO rules and guidelines.
- Initiatives to strengthen field staff skills and qualifications framework and training;
- A review of IAATO's draft Unmanned Aerial Vehicle (UAV) policies following feedback from an additional season of implementation. The ban on recreational use of UAVs in wildlife-rich coastal areas was approved to continue for another year.
- Further review of guidelines and updates to existing guidelines, including on understanding fur seal behaviour.

Treaty Party representatives are annually invited to join any of the open sessions during IAATO's Annual Meeting and subsequent workshops.

IAATO Secretariat staff and Operator representatives participated in internal and external meetings, liaising with National Antarctic Programs, governmental, scientific, environmental and industry organisations. In addition to individual government meetings, IAATO participated in:

- **Council of Managers of National Antarctic Programs (COMNAP) 28th Annual Meeting**, Brno, Czech Republic, August 2017. IAATO greatly values cooperation and collaboration between its Membership and National Antarctic Programs;
- **SCAR Priority Threat Management Workshop**, July 2017, Leuven, Belgium
- **Association of Arctic Expedition Cruise Operators Conference & Annual Meeting**, Oslo, Norway, October 2017;
- **International Ice Chart Working Group**, Hobart, Tasmania, September 2017;
- **ATCM five-yearly site guideline review**, February 2018, on HMS Protector, together with UK, Argentina and ASOC representatives;
- **AECO off-vessel risk assessment tool (O-VRAT) development workshop**, November 2017, Copenhagen, Denmark;
- IAATO continues to support development of the **International Maritime Organisation's (IMO)** mandatory Polar Code as an advisor to Cruise Lines International Association (CLIA), participating in relevant IMO meetings;
- IAATO will participate in the **IHO International Hydrographic Commission on Antarctica (HCA) 15th** conference in Brazil, June 2018
- Deep field operator, ALE, participated in the **AMPS (Antarctic Mesoscale Perdition System** <http://www2.mmm.ucar.edu/rt/amps/>) meteorology workshop, June 2017

Environmental Monitoring

IAATO provides ATCM and CEP with detailed information on Operators' activities in Antarctica and works collaboratively with scientific institutions, particularly on long-term environmental monitoring and educational outreach. This includes the Antarctic Site Inventory, Lynch Lab at Stony Brook University and the Zoological Society of London/Oxford University. Additionally, IAATO Operators note sightings of fishing vessels for subsequent reporting to CCAMLR in support of the work against IUU fishing.

IAATO welcomes opportunities for collaboration with other organisations.

Tourism Incidents 2017-18

IAATO follows a policy of disclosing incidents to ensure risks are understood and appropriate lessons are learned for all Antarctic operators. The 2017-18 season saw no major incidents involving IAATO Operators.

In all, a total of eight medical evacuations have been reported by IAATO Operators, all via Frei base, using flights from both DAP and ALE. In all instances both IAATO and the Operators involved are grateful for the assistance provided.

Following a thorough investigation regarding allegations of a waste compliance issue from the previous season, IAATO members voted to place an Operator on probation with their membership status changed to "not in good standing" until certain criteria have been met. The Operator's competent authority has been informed.

Scientific and Conservation Support

During the 2017-18 season, IAATO Operators cost-effectively or freely transported 211 scientific, support and conservation staff, and their equipment and supplies between stations, field sites and gateway ports. This included:

- Transfers of scientists between stations;
- Non-urgent medical evacuations;
- Field support of research projects;
- Collection of scientific samples and other data collection for research programs (all permitted);
- Transport of scientific equipment to/from stations;
- Transport of personnel to/from the ATCM site guideline review
- Citizen science projects including data collection e.g. HappyWhale.com.
- Air support for deep field research programs

Initial reports indicate that IAATO Operators and their passengers contributed more than US\$900,000 to scientific and conservation organisations active in Antarctica and the sub-Antarctic during 2017-18 season.

Over the past decade, donations have totalled well over US\$6 million.

With Thanks

IAATO appreciates the opportunity to work cooperatively with Antarctic Treaty Parties, COMNAP, SCAR, CCAMLR, IHO/HCA, ASOC and others toward the long-term protection of Antarctica.