2019 IAATO Antarctic Fellows Announced

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: 31 July 2019, 0900 EEST

Plovdiv, Bulgaria: The International Association of Antarctica Tour Operators (IAATO) and the Council of Managers of National Antarctic Programs (COMNAP), have announced the recipients of this years IAATO Antarctic Fellowship, funded by IAATO.

The fellowships are an investment in the professional development of talented early career researchers and aim to further the understanding of human presence in Antarctica. The two fellows chosen were Martina Mascioni from the University of La Plata, Argentina, and Daniela Cajiao Vargas from the Autonomous University of Madrid. The fellowships will enable both recipients, who are working towards their PhDs, to join a project team at a research institute in another Antarctic Treaty country.

Martina will analyze phytoplankton samples collected from IAATO vessels since 2017 by a citizen science project called FjordPhyto. She will receive training that will enable her work to change our view of phytoplankton diversity in the Western Antarctic Peninsula. Without phytoplankton, life in Antarctica would not exist. Daniela’s research focusses on two different sectors of Antarctic tourism to explore how visiting Antarctica affects one’s experience and understanding of the region. Her answers will inform responsible tourism management, strengthen educational experiences and contribute to policy discussions.

Mark van der Hulst, Chair of IAATO’s Executive Committee said, “Supporting scientific endeavour is core business for IAATO so we are delighted to award our first Antarctic Fellowship to Daniela and Martina. It was our expectation to fund one fellow this year but, given the extremely high standard of applications and unable to separate the two leading contenders, IAATO resolved to increase the fellowship to include both.

“Both researchers demonstrated a deep understanding of IAATO’s work and how their research will further our mission to practice safe, environmentally responsible private-sector Antarctic travel. Critically, by supporting their professional development at a host university, we will open up new opportunities, strengthen
international capacity and cooperation. We anticipate that their work will contribute to our understanding of human activity in Antarctica for many years to come.”

Ends

Issued by the International Association of Antarctica Tour Operators.

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Notes for Editors:

About the 2019 IAATO Antarctic Fellows:

Daniela Cajiao Vargas from the Universidad Autonoma de Madrid in Spain will visit North Carolina State University, USA, for her project titled, *Experiential and learning outcomes of tourism in Antarctica: do different trip modalities matter?*

Martina Mascioni from the University of La Plata, Argentina, will visit Scripps Institute of Oceanography, California, USA, for her project titled, *Antarctic tourism provides and unprecedented understanding of phytoplankton biodiversity in the Western Antarctic Peninsula.*

- IAATO and COMNAP made the announcement at COMNAP’s Annual General Meeting XXXI in Plovdiv, Bulgaria, hosted by the Bulgarian Antarctic Institute

- In addition to its own bylaws and requirements for membership, IAATO requires its members to abide by the Antarctic Treaty System and other international regulations.

**About IAATO**

IAATO is a member organization founded in 1991 to advocate and promote the practice of safe and environmentally responsible private-sector travel to the Antarctic. IAATO Members work together to develop, adopt and implement operational standards that mitigate potential environmental impacts. These standards have proved to be successful including but are not limited to: Antarctic site-specific guidelines, site selection criteria, passenger to staff ratios, limiting numbers of passengers ashore, boot washing guidelines and the prevention of the transmission of alien organisms, wilderness etiquette, ship scheduling and vessel communication procedures, emergency medical evacuation procedures, emergency contingency plans, reporting procedures, marine wildlife watching guidelines, station visitation policies and much more. IAATO has a global network of over 100 members.