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Establishing an Annual Round Table Discussion on Antarctic Tourism: Summary Report on June 2009 IAATO Meeting

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Information Paper submitted by IAATO

Summary

Fundamentally, IAATO sees cooperation, collaboration and open discussion with Treaty Parties as integral to successful tourism regulation and management. To that end, IAATO welcomes the opportunity to participate annually as an Expert at ATCM. In the past, IAATO has periodically organized supplemental forums for IAATO members and Antarctic Treaty Party representatives to further strengthen this dialogue. On June 11, 2009, one such gathering was held at the conclusion of the 20th IAATO Annual Meeting in Providence, Rhode Island, USA. The idea of the Round Table discussion was to continue the year-earlier dialogue on “The Future of Antarctic Tourism,” particularly within the context of ATCM XXXII WP010 *Strategic Vision of Antarctic Tourism for the Next Decade* and the resulting *General Principles of Antarctic Tourism* (Measure 7, 2009).

The discussion was wide-ranging, and benefited from the use of “Chatham House Rule,” which encouraged a spirited and collaborative open exchange of ideas and comments. It is IAATO’s intention to provide such a forum annually to address tourism-related topics and challenges. At the present time, the next Round Table discussion for IAATO operators and representatives of Treaty Parties is planned for June 24, 2010, following the IAATO 21st Annual Meeting in Torino, Italy. All Antarctic Treaty Parties are invited to attend and participate, both at the Round Table discussion but also during the open sessions of the IAATO Annual Meeting.

IAATO perceives cooperation, collaboration and open discussion with Treaty Parties as integral to successful tourism regulation and management in Antarctica. IAATO is grateful for and welcomes the opportunity to participate as an Expert at ATCM and Observer at CEP. In addition, IAATO would like to offer a forum for dialogue on an annual basis in conjunction with the IAATO Annual Meeting.

On June 11, 2009, an informal gathering of IAATO members and representatives of Antarctic Treaty Consultative Party (ATCP) governments was held at the conclusion of the 20th IAATO Annual Meeting in Providence, Rhode Island, USA. The idea of the meeting was to continue “The Future of Antarctic Tourism” discussion from the March 2008 multi-day meeting in Miami, Florida, USA, and to pilot the effectiveness of a similar but shorter forum in conjunction with the IAATO Annual Meeting.

The June session followed “Chatham House Rule” (<http://www.chathamhouse.org.uk/about/chathamhouserule/>). The aim of the discussion was to be forward-looking: addressing the challenges, opportunities and concerns facing both the governments and Antarctic tour operators, and how all involved can most effectively work together to ensure sensible Antarctic tourism management and regulatory strategies.

The discussion touched on the current economic downturn and the current regulatory issues being dealt with, both at ATCM and the International Maritime Organization (IMO); predicting tourism’s growth and formalizing cooperation between the industry and Antarctic Treaty Parties; the meaning of “self-regulation”; the changing face of Antarctic Tourism; the value of continued face-to-face meetings between the industry and Antarctic Treaty Parties; the Tiered Risk Assessment that IAATO has initiated to assist its members in developing a risk assessment profile for their operations in Antarctica, including the application of the current IMO Guidelines for Ships Operating in Polar Waters, and potentially in future discussions at IMO on development of the mandatory Polar Code; and the right role for IAATO within the ATCM regime. Follow-up discussions on the above, as well as new or developing Antarctic tourism-related issues, are expected to be on the agenda for the 2010 Round Table gathering.

Noting a few of the conclusions and recommendations reached during the 2009 meeting:

It was agreed by most participants that it is possible to make reasonable projections about the evolution of Antarctic tourism over next three to five years. In this short term, tourism likely will remain ship-based, but with fewer smaller vessels and more carrying 200-400 passengers. The ban on HFO will have an impact – the size and duration still to be determined – on the continued feasibility of large, cruise-only vessels operating in Antarctic waters. Predications beyond five years are more challenging, but potential key stimuli for change were identified and discussed; e.g. improved air access, advanced vessel technologies, increased demand for land-based tourism activities, etc.

As an industry organization, IAATO will continue to provide practical techniques to promote safe and environmentally responsible tourism management.

Continued dialogue between Treaty Parties and the Antarctic tourism industry has value, both at the level of an individual national program conferring with its stakeholders, and in the broader context of industry-sponsored forums such as this Round Table discussion. With the agreement of its Members, IAATO intends to continue hosting such meetings and invite competent authorities. It is hoped that those Treaty Parties participating in this meeting will provide IAATO with advice and encouragement on how best to succeed in this continued outreach effort.

The full summary report on the Round Table discussion can be downloaded from the IAATO website, on the “Publications & Papers” page, under “Additional Publications”: <http://www.iaato.org/info.html>

Another Round Table discussion among IAATO operators and representatives of Treaty Parties is scheduled for the IAATO 21st Annual Meeting in Torino, Italy, June 24, 2010. All Antarctic Treaty Parties are invited to attend and participate in the discussion, as well as the open sessions of regular IAATO business on June 22 and 23.