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Report of the International Association of Antarctica Tour Operators 2012-13

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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 XXXVI, under Article III (2) of the Antarctic Treaty.

IAATO continues to focus activities in support of its mission statement to ensure:

- 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 in the *2013-14 Fact Sheet*, and on the IAATO website: www.iaato.org.

IAATO Membership and Visitor Levels during 2012-13

IAATO comprises 116 Members, Associates and Affiliates. Member offices are located worldwide, representing 61% of the Antarctic Treaty Consultative Party countries, and carrying nationals from nearly all Treaty Parties annually to Antarctica.

During the 2012-13 Antarctic tourism season, the overall number of visitors increased to 34,375, following a 22% decline the previous year (26,519). While this represented a 29% increase from the 2011-12 season, the total was not significantly different from 2009-10 and 2010-11, where totals were 36,881 and 33,824 respectively. Tourism continued well below the 2007-08 season, when IAATO operators transported 45,213 visitors to the continent.

These numbers reflect only those travelling with IAATO member companies. Details on tourism statistics can be found in ATCM XXXVI IP103 *IAATO Overview of Antarctic Tourism: 2012-13 Season and Preliminary Estimates for 2013-14*. The Membership Directory and additional statistics on IAATO member activities can be found at www.iaato.org.

Recent Work and Activities

A number of initiatives were undertaken during the year, including:

- Adopting a new five-year Strategic Plan, which outlines a vision for the association: “Through self-regulation, Antarctic tourism is a sustainable, safe activity that causes no more than a minor or transitory impact on the environment and creates a corps of ambassadors for the continued protection of Antarctica.”
- Instigating a Dockside Observer program for IAATO yachts, a new component in the association’s enhanced observer scheme. The program will trial during the 2013-14 season and parallels an existing observer scheme that IAATO has had in place for many years for larger vessels operated by Members.
- Developing the Field Staff Online Assessment and Certification Program to include different activities, staff levels, and geographic areas. A total of 223 staff have passed at least one of the

assessments, with more than 177 this past season alone. A new IAATO Field Staff Newsletter, with news and updates from around the Continent, was also initiated during the recently concluded season.

- Implementing a new IAATO Climate Change PowerPoint Presentation, for use by lecture staffs aboard IAATO vessels to assist visitors to understand the implications of climate change on the Antarctic environment. The presentation was reviewed by SCAR, and can be downloaded from the IAATO website at: <http://iaato.org/climate-change-in-antarctica>
- Collecting hydrographic data on a trial and opportunistic basis by a number of IAATO vessel operators. This includes the Crowd Sourcing Project with the involvement of the United Kingdom Hydrographic Office and other surveying initiatives. Captains of IAATO vessels also will contribute to a prioritization list for future surveys of Antarctic waters.

IAATO Meeting and Participation at Other Meetings during 2012-13

IAATO Secretariat staff and member representatives participated in internal and external meetings, liaising with National Antarctic Programs, governmental, scientific, environmental and industry organisations.

- The IAATO 24th Meeting (April 22-24, 2013, Punta Arenas, Chile) hosted over 130 participants. Representatives from Chile, Germany, UK, USA and COMNAP attended. In addition to the above-mentioned initiatives, notable meeting outcomes included:
 - Approval of three Associate Members as new (full) Members. IAATO now has 49 Member and six Associate operator/organizers among its Membership, and continues to represent 100% of SOLAS passenger vessels active in Antarctic tourism.
 - A report on the survey of IAATO operators relative to ATCM Visitor Site Guidelines and path use on Barrientos Island;
 - Adoption of guidelines for multi-night coastal camping, short overnight stays and emperor penguin colony visits;
 - Formal sharing IAATO vessel operators of carbon emission reduction actions and techniques currently being used.
- A full-day Search and Rescue Workshop followed the meeting, with more than 75 attendees including passenger ship captains, government rescue officials from Chile, Argentina and the USA, tour operators, logistics managers, expedition leaders and IAATO staff. The proceedings were chaired by David Edwards from the Office of Search and Rescue, US Coast Guard. The workshop included a morning of presentations on SAR from several different perspectives (MRCC's, COMNAP, IAATO and Operators), and included an interactive replay of a live February 8, 2013, SAR exercise conducted aboard Holland America Line's MV *Veendam*.
- The Association welcomed the opportunity to participate at COMNAP XXIV in Portland OR, USA (July 2013). IAATO places great merit in good cooperation and collaboration between its Membership and National Antarctic Programs.
- An IAATO representative attended the 12th International Hydrographic Organization / Hydrographic Commission on Antarctica (IHO/HCA) Meeting in Montevideo, Uruguay (October 2012). IAATO remains a strong supporter the ongoing work of the HCA, and will continue to work with HO's and HCA in the development of a crowd-sourcing hydrographic data collection scheme.
- As an advisor to Cruise Lines International Association (CLIA), IAATO continues to be active in the development of International Maritime Organization's (IMO) mandatory Polar Code. This included participation in a Polar Shipping Risk Assessment Workshop in Ottawa, Canada (June 2012); the 91st session of the IMO's Marine Safety Committee meeting; the 57th session of the IMO's Design and Equipment (DE) Subcommittee meeting; and intercessional correspondence group discussions.

- The IAATO 25th Annual Meeting will be held in Providence, Rhode Island, USA (dates TBA). Interested Treaty Parties are welcome to attend and should contact IAATO at iaato@iaato.org.

Environmental Monitoring

IAATO continues to provide ATCM and CEP with detailed information on member activities in Antarctica. For details see ATCM XXXVI/IP103 *IAATO Overview of Antarctic Tourism: 2012-13 Season and Preliminary Estimates for 2013-14 Antarctic Season* and ATCM XXXVI IP97 *Report on IAATO Operator Use of Antarctic Peninsula Landing Sites and ATCM Visitor Site Guidelines, 2012-13 Season*.

IAATO continues to work collaboratively with scientific institutions particularly on environmental monitoring and educational outreach. This includes working with Antarctic Site Inventory and the Zoological Society of London/Oxford University.

IAATO welcomes opportunities for collaboration with other organisations.

Tourism Incidents 2012-13

IAATO continues to follow a policy of disclosing incidents to ensure risks are understood and appropriate lessons are learned for all Antarctic operators. Incidents during the 2012-13 season included:

- On December 20, a chartered DC3 – operated by Antarctic Logistics Centre International (ALCI) and The Antarctic Company (TAC) and managed by Kenn Borek Air Ltd (KBAL) – struck a sastrugi on take off from a camp in the Holtanna Mountain Range in Dronning Maud Land. There were no major injuries and no environmental damage. A second plane was immediately deployed from Novo Runway to safely retrieve all the passengers and crew. The damaged DC3 will remain at the crash site until next season, with a full investigation underway by ALCI and KBAL.
- On January 18, MV *Orion* received a distress call while in the Southern Ocean regarding a solo sailor in a lifeboat. As closest vessel, MV *Orion* was tasked by MRCC to divert to assist. By the evening of January 20, the lifeboat had been spotted by MV *Orion*, a Zodiac was deployed despite rough weather, and the sailor – Frenchman Alain Delord – was rescued.
- On February 18, a group of six from the IAATO yacht *Santa Maria Australis* hiked up the ridge on the northern part of Hovgaard Island for a scenic view of Port Pléneau. IAATO yacht *Pelagic Australis* was also anchored in the same bay. One passenger separated from the group and left the prescribed route falling seven metres into a crevasse. The skipper of *Santa Maria Australis*, assisted by personnel onboard *Pelagic Australis*, proceeded with caution to the scene and successfully rescued the individual who had suffered a few non-life threatening injuries. Other IAATO operators were notified of the crevasse location on February 21.
- On March 12, the expedition leader of the *Plancius* notified Oceanwide Expeditions that a diver disappeared during a scheduled dive at Half Moon Island. A search found the diver unconscious at a depth of five meters. Following her recovery, extended CPR and attention by the ship's doctor, the passenger was pronounced dead. The passenger, 51 years old Japanese national, was an experienced diver with more than 1,500 hours dry suit experience. Oceanwide immediately notified all relevant authorities and IAATO. The Dutch government has requested Argentina, as the next port of call, to conduct a full investigation. The outcomes are pending.

Scientific and Conservation Support

During the 2012-13 season, IAATO Members cost-effectively or on *pro bono* basis transported approximately 100 scientific, support and conservation staff, and their equipment and supplies between stations, field sites and gateway ports.

IAATO Operators and their passengers also contributed more than US\$440,000 to scientific and conservation organisations active in Antarctica and the sub-Antarctic (e.g. Save the Albatross, Antarctic

Heritage Trust, Last Ocean, Mawson's Huts Foundation, Oceanites and World Wildlife Fund). Over the past nine years, these donations have totalled approximately US\$3 million in cash donations.

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.