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## **Management of tourism in Antarctica – an IAATO perspective**



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*Information Paper Submitted by the  
International Association of Antarctica Tour Operators (IAATO)*

### **Introduction**

In anticipation of the discussions during ATCM XXXVII's Tourism Working Group discussions on land-based and adventure tourism, IAATO offers its perspective on the challenges and opportunities in the management of tourism in Antarctica, should this be of assistance to the discussions. This information paper intends to complement IAATO's other Information Paper on trends in land-based and adventure tourism (ATCM XXXVII IP78 *Adventure tourism: activities undertaken by IAATO Members*).

### **Guiding principles**

IAATO has developed guiding principles, set in the Association's bylaws, which bind its membership. The guiding principles were developed to ensure that IAATO Members' activities were consistent with the Antarctic Treaty, Environmental Protocol, and ATCM Measures and Resolutions.

There are several key parameters within which IAATO Members are expected to operate:

1. To advocate, promote and practice safe and environmentally responsible travel to the Antarctic. (IAATO Bylaws Article II, Section B.)
2. To operate within the parameters of the Antarctic Treaty System. (IAATO Bylaws Article II, Section D.)
3. Their planned activities will have no more than a minor or transitory impact on the Antarctic environment. (IAATO Bylaws Article II, Section E.)

### **Issues for consideration**

The following three aspects are considered by IAATO as being key to effective regulation and management of Antarctic tourism.

### **Implementation of Agreements**

Various ATCMs have adopted a number of recommendations to guide the assessment and management of tourism activities. These recommendations have proved very helpful to those organizing and conducting activities in Antarctica and presumably also to Competent Authorities, for example:

- Recommendation XVIII-1, which includes *Guidance for those Organising and Conducting Tourism and Non-governmental Activities in the Antarctic*.
- Resolution 4 (2004) which includes *Guidelines on contingency planning, insurance and other matters for tourist and other non-governmental activities in the Antarctic Treaty area*.

- Measure 4 (2004) *Insurance and contingency planning for tourism and non-governmental activities in the Antarctic Treaty Area.*
- Resolution 3 (2011) *General Guidelines for Visitors to the Antarctic*
- Resolution 9 (2012), *The assessment of land-based expeditionary activities*

IAATO member operators are expected to operate within the parameters given above, irrespective of whether they have been fully ratified and adopted by all Treaty Parties, and IAATO has set procedures in place to verify compliance of the membership. Further work on the observation of Members' activities is in progress; see ATCM XXXIV IP107 (IAATO) *Towards an IAATO Enhanced Observer Scheme*. However, as it is not always the case that tourism and non-governmental activities will operate within the IAATO fold, IAATO would welcome full implementation of the above agreements.

### **Assessment of Activities**

Inevitably there are differing approaches and considerations within the national legislation of different Competent Authorities. IAATO has noted this variation in the assessment of its Members' activities, in particular of adventure tourism. For example, during the 2013-14 season, IAATO Members were authorized to visit Antarctica by fourteen different Treaty Parties: Australia, Argentina, Belgium, Chile, Canada, France, Germany, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Poland, Sweden, United Kingdom and United States of America; one member reports its activities to another Treaty Party (South Africa). Within that context, IAATO has a unique perspective of the assessment of tourism activities in Antarctica.

Within its own capabilities, IAATO endeavours to ensure a consistency in operational practices amongst its Members. However, membership of IAATO is voluntary and motivated by a desire by responsible, usually very experienced, operators to 'do the right thing'. IAATO Members fully subscribe to a system that is supported by robust national regulation, and, within that context, IAATO would welcome on going and continued discussions between, and with, Competent Authorities to further strengthen the system.

### **Reporting of Activities**

ATCM XXXVII IP78 *Adventure tourism: activities undertaken by IAATO Members* provides an overview of the trends in both land-based and adventure tourism. These are based on the information held in IAATO's database from Post Visit Report (PVR) Forms. This overview of trends highlighted a number of issues:

- 1) The IAATO database is currently the most comprehensive database of human activities in Antarctica. However, PVRs, and consequently the database, were tailored towards traditional forms of Antarctic tourism, e.g. ship-based activities. Less common and diverse forms of adventure activities do not easily fit within the current PVR model.
- 2) Information within the IAATO database is scattered through various forums and not readily analysable or comparable. IAATO is aware of this lacuna and has been working with its operators to improve reporting, particularly of land-based and air activities, while also undertaking to streamline information currently held in the database.
- 3) One-off activities do not readily show up in the database but they often have a high profile in media and social media. Typically, this is a result of meeting sponsorship deals and/or providing education and outreach elements to the expedition. This perceptible public presence often outweighs the actual number of participants or risks involved in an expedition.

Going forward, IAATO is working in a number of areas to improve the collection of data on Members' activities, through traditional PVR forms and other means, and improvement to its database to analyse the data more readily and with more useful output.