Dear IAATO Members

The IAATO Secretariat is pleased to provide you with an update on the XLI Antarctic Treaty Consultative Meeting (ATCM), 13-18 May 2018.

Amanda Lynnes  
Head of Communications & Environment  
International Association of Antarctica Tour Operators

**Why does IAATO go to the ATCM?**

Antarctic Treaty Consultative Parties manage human activity in Antarctica. To aid their discussions, IAATO has been attending annual and special ATCMs as an Invited Expert on private-sector travel since 1994. IAATO submits Information Papers, including annual reports ([https://iaato.org/current-iaato-information-papers](https://iaato.org/current-iaato-information-papers)) and contributes to relevant discussions as appropriate. The ATCM provides an unparalleled opportunity to meet with Treaty Party delegates and other Invited Experts/Observers to discuss permitting, field operations, collaborative opportunities; and to educate decision-makers about IAATO’s proactive work in support of safe, environmentally responsible Antarctic travel.

**REMEMBER:** News travels fast in the Antarctic community and it is sometimes inaccurate. It is essential to endeavour to keep the IAATO Secretariat informed about *any* seasonal incidents or other issues so that we are well prepared to handle potential enquires from Treaty Party officials and Competent Authorities.

If you need a reminder of how the ATCM works, see the information at the end of this report or visit [www.ats.aq](http://www.ats.aq).

**Who were the IAATO representatives?**

Dr Damon Stanwell-Smith (Executive Director), Lisa Kelley (Head of Operations), Amanda Lynnes (Head of Communications & Environment), Ute Hohn-Bowen (advisor on ship operations, Antarpply Expeditions) and David
Rootes (advisor on air and land-based operations, Antarctic Logistics & Expeditions).

The Treaty Secretariat requested delegations be reduced in size for 2018 in order to support a shortened ATCM organised by them in Argentina at short notice after the original host, Ecuador, pulled out. Many topics have been deferred until 2019, however there were still a considerable number of Working Papers to discuss.

What was presented of interest to IAATO?

1) Site Guideline Review
Parties thanked the UK, IAATO, Argentina and the Antarctic and Southern Ocean Coalition (ASOC) for conducting the site guideline review from HMS Protector in February 2018. Full details of revised and new site guidelines were provided in IAATO Operational Update 2018.01 on 30 May (https://iaato.org/member-newsletter-archives). Note you will need to log-in. See also ‘Latest Postings’.

Regular reviews of visitor sites will continue. Over the coming year, Parties will be developing a site guideline review checklist that help reviewers and apply consistency. A repository of pictures will also be developed to aid in the reviews of site guidelines. IAATO has offered to assist with this task, particularly since our members and their field staff are best placed to provide regular, suitable images.

2) Inexpressible Island
Parties supported a request from China to investigate establishing an Antarctic Specially Protected Area (ASPA) at Inexpressible Island, Terra Nova Bay. IAATO intervened to stress the historical significance of the area to visitors, supported by New Zealand who requested that the site’s historical values be included in future discussions. Parties agreed that China should develop the ASPA in collaboration with interested Parties and Observers, including
IAATO. IAATO arranged a side meeting with China to update them on current visitor numbers and trends, offering to provide accurate data as required for management discussions.

Thank you to IAATO’s Ross Sea operators and others for advising the IAATO ATCM delegation on this topic.

3) **Chinese management of human activities**

China informed IAATO that the Chinese Arctic and Antarctic Administration has developed a website in English that includes information about Chinese legislation for managing human activities in Antarctica. New protocols for visiting Chinese Stations were also outlined.


Please see IAATO Operational Update 2018.01 for a summary of the station visit protocols ([https://goo.gl/pf5EW5](https://goo.gl/pf5EW5)).

4) **Tourism Growth**

There were constructive discussions about tourism growth, particularly in relation to a Working Paper (ATCM XLI WP 022) submitted by the USA and UK that called for practical visitor management actions. IAATO was praised for our collective efforts in self-regulation and reporting.

Concerns were expressed about potential cumulative impacts, non-IAATO operators, effective regulation, increasing land-based activities and numbers of ships. IAATO verbally presented a selection of recent growth management outcomes from its annual meeting and encouraged Parties to strengthen their permitting systems.

The USA made a positive intervention about the role of IAATO in effective visitor management, encouraging Treaty Parties to send representatives to IAATO’s Annual Meetings to learn more about IAATO and how it manages its activities. Several Parties subsequently enquired about attending our Annual Meeting in Cape Town in 2019.

The ATCM has prioritized developing a strategic approach to environmentally managed tourism and NGO activities in Antarctica. Between now and 2020, their Strategic Plan includes developing a vision, holding informal workshops, discussing growth in non-IAATO registered operators, inviting Parties to review their domestic implementation and permitting processes, and to implement outstanding measures. There was talk of undertaking a push for the latter ahead of the Treaty’s 60th anniversary in 2019.

**Tourism Management Workshop**

The delegation of the Netherlands proposed, at short notice, to hold an informal 2-day workshop to undertake a ‘stocktake of tourism priorities’ at some point over the coming year in collaboration with the UK, IAATO and other interested Parties. A side meeting was held to discuss logistics, venue and outcomes. It’s very positive that IAATO has been invited. We’ll keep you posted as details become clear.
5) Unpermitted yachts
Parties continue to express concerns about unpermitted yachts operating in Antarctica. Discussions were based on several papers including an annual overview submitted by the UK, Argentina, Chile and IAATO. IAATO voiced its support for a consistent and strengthened authorisation process and appropriate censure for offenders. IAATO also convened a side meeting for concerned Parties to discuss permitting challenges, which may be continued at the Tourism Management Workshop proposed by the Netherlands (above).

6) Air operations
A request for IAATO to submit an overview of non-governmental air operations was postponed until ATCM XVII in 2019. The Council of Managers of National Antarctic Programmes (COMNAP) will also provide an overview. In 2019 it is anticipated that there will be more focussed discussions on the increase in air activity in Antarctica and to assess the need for additional actions, particularly in relation to air safety. The International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) will be invited to provide information at the next two ATCMs.

A Norwegian inspection report (ATCM XLI WP 026) of selected facilities in Dronning Maud Land and Coats Land prompted much discussion. IAATO highlighted a need for further reviews on flight safety issues particularly with the potential for increased air traffic and associated search and rescue implications. We encouraged all parties to ensure their aircraft had tracking devices and to participate in both an Antarctic-wide real time monitoring system and the electronic Antarctic Flight Information System (e-AFIM) managed by COMNAP.

7) Biosecurity
Preventing the introduction and spread of non-native species remains a high priority for ATCM and is strongly supported by IAATO. The IMO guidelines for biofouling are being reviewed by the CEP, to be discussed in 2019. Parties and Observers, including IAATO, will likely be asked to provide reports on the application of biosecurity guidelines.

8) Other news
Parties commended IAATO, both by plenary interventions and informally, for our Polar Guide: Antarctica app — and reported they love using it!

A few Parties voiced support for codifying IAATO’s ban on the recreational use of Remotely Piloted Aircraft Systems. IAATO’s decision to continue the ban for next season was well received.

IAATO and the Scientific Committee for Antarctic Research (SCAR) had meetings about the joint Systematic Conservation Plan (SCP) for the Antarctic Peninsula, both at ATCM and the recent SCAR conference in Switzerland. Good progress is being made by researchers at Monash University, on the gathering of necessary data for the planned analyses. SCAR and IAATO will submit a progress report at ATCM XLII in 2019.
What is the Antarctic Treaty Consultative Meeting (ATCM) exactly?


Only the 29 Consultative Parties take part in decision-making, but non-Consultative Parties, Observers and Invited Experts (including IAATO) can contribute to discussions. Discussions are based on papers submitted in advance of the meeting. They aim to uphold the principles of the Antarctic Treaty and Environment Protocol, often leading to guidelines and regulations for the management of the Treaty area and work of the ATCM.

The Committee for Environmental Protection (CEP) acts as an advisory body to the ATCM. It meets over several days at the start of every ATCM to discuss issues specifically linked to the Environment Protocol (also known as the ‘Madrid Protocol’; signed in 1991, www.ats.aq/e/ep.htm). Any recommendations from the CEP are then presented to the ATCM for consideration and adoption.

Measures, which are legally binding, Decisions and Resolutions are adopted at ATCM by consensus. This means that decision-making can take a while so IAATO’s self-regulatory framework plays a valuable role in achieving safe, responsible visitor management.

You might also be interested in…

Reform the Antarctic Treaty: This editorial in the journal Nature argues that political protection for the planet’s last great wilderness is no longer fit for purpose and that its governance should be democratic: https://goo.gl/WcNT9Y