



Issue 2

October 2010

**Welcome to this edition of the COMNAP newsletter. It seems like only a few days ago, we were all in Buenos Aires, Argentina, for the COMNAP AGM. But, looking at my calendar, I can confirm that it has been over month since then...and what a month it has been.**

The new home of the COMNAP Secretariat, (Christchurch, New Zealand), a relatively calm place most of the time, was the site of a significant earthquake on 4 September 2010. Fortunately, the magnitude 7.1 earthquake caused no loss of life. It did, however, result in major damage to the city's infrastructure-destroying many buildings and leaving homes without electricity and water. Even today, days after the main earthquake, there continue to be aftershocks over 4.0 in magnitude. The earthquake happened on a Saturday around 4:30 in the morning. During this time, the University of Canterbury, which hosts the COMNAP Secretariat on the ground floor of one of its oldest buildings-the Geography Building-was severely damaged. The COMNAP office itself received minor damage to its walls and the files in the cabinets were thrown to the floor. The entire University was closed for 11 days, with the COMNAP Secretariat being allowed to open up for business on 15 September. Over the course of those 11 days, I received so many emails and best wishes from many of you and I wanted to thank you all for thinking of me and my family. Antarctica New Zealand, the US Antarctic Program offices and the Italian Antarctic Program offices all located in Christchurch too, near the Christchurch airport, were not significantly affected and the main-body Antarctic season for the Ross Sea Region of the Antarctic will begin as planned this week.



Michelle Rogan-Finnemore  
COMNAP Executive Secretary

## Annual General Meeting XXII



COMNAP Delegates met in the city of Buenos Aires, Argentina for the twenty-second AGM and the fourteenth Symposium. Several workshops were held on the margins of the AGM, along with bilateral and other meetings. The AGM was very productive with significant discussion on the Rules of Procedure, on the importance of the discussions at the International Maritime Organization (IMO) on a mandatory polar code, on the future of the Antarctic Flight Information Manual (AFIM), on the role and terms of reference for COMNAP Expert Groups and on a COMNAP "vision" and five-year planning document. The plenary elected two new COMNAP Executive Committee Vice Chairs. They are Dr. Mariano Memolli (Direccion Nacional del Antartico, Argentina) and Dr. Yuansheng Li (Polar Research Institute, China). The plenary also elected Dr. Jose Retamales to continue in the role as COMNAP Chair for an additional year, meaning he will have served four years in the role upon the end of this term in August 2011. The COMNAP Executive Committee will hold their annual meeting in mid-November 2010. The draft AGM Minutes are available via the members-only web site for viewing, as are the Rules of Procedure.

The Symposium, which was held on 11 August, also proved to be a successful and productive event with over 50 attendees, 13 oral presentations and 16 posters on display. It was

an excellent opportunity to share information on issues related to the central theme of "responding to change through new approaches". The proceedings from the Symposium will be published and made available in the next month. Three workshops were held on the margins of the AGM, each was proposed as a COMNAP project for 2009-2010. The first was a one-day event on Non-native Species in the Antarctic, a workshop convened by Yves Frenot (COMNAP MNAP and CEP Chair). The workshop was an opportunity for National Antarctic Programs to hear about the preliminary results of the SCAR Aliens in Antarctica IPY project and to explore ways to respond to the findings from the project. The second, was a half-day event on Managing Pandemics in the Antarctic, convened by Iain Grant and the COMNAP Medical Expert Group. While the risk of a pandemic is now reduced, the workshop was an opportunity to share ideas amongst NAP medical experts. The information was of particular value to those with wintering-over stations and the more isolated bases. Finally, the Energy Management and Technology workshop, convened by David Blake, was very informative with nine presentations on a range of topics from wind turbines to internet broadband.

The 2011 COMNAP AGM will be held in Stockholm, Sweden, hosted by the Polar Research Secretariat. Day 1 of the AGM will be 1 August.



## Chile, Australia and New Zealand strengthen Antarctic science ties

Example of collaboration between COMNAP Member, National Antarctic Programs

William Arlidge is studying for a Master degree in Marine Ecology at the Victoria University, New Zealand, and has a grant from the Our World – Underwater Scholarship Society - Rolex Scholarship, sponsored by Rolex (yes, the Swiss brand of watches), which “has provided firsthand experiences in underwater-related disciplines to young people considering careers in the underwater world. Each year, a scholar is selected to work with leaders in marine-related fields partaking in endeavors ranging from scientific expeditions, underwater research, field study, laboratory assignments, equipment testing and design, photographic instruction, etc.”

Arlidge will work with Dr. Marcelo Gonzalez, one of the microbiologists of the Chilean Antarctic

Institute (INACH) as part of his research team on the project “Induction of the immune response in the Antarctic sea urchin *Sterechnus neumayeri* by lipopolysaccharides and heat stress” and will accompany Dr. Gonzalez at the next Chilean Antarctic Expedition (ECA) by diving in Fildes Bay, King George Island. A second student, doctoral student Ernesto Molina, from the University of Technology, Sydney, Australia, received a SCAR scholarship and this summer will also join the ECA.

Both are clear examples of the kind of collaboration that are being stimulated from various international bodies such as SCAR and COMNAP and we look forward to hearing more about the ECA project in the future.

## COMNAP Project on Tsunami Impact on Coastal Antarctica

The 8.8 magnitude earthquake centered on Concepcion, Chile, in February 2010, triggered a tsunami warning for most of the Pacific and had many of the National Antarctic Programs which operate from coastal Antarctic stations and utilize coastal Antarctic infrastructure asking what sort of impact might coastal Antarctica expect from a tsunami triggered by a major southern hemisphere earthquake. This question

is exactly the type of research question that students of geology love to pursue. So COMNAP has joined the University of Canterbury’s Antarctic Research Centre-Gateway Antarctica, the Department of Geological Sciences and the Institute for Geologic Sciences (GNS) to explore this question by supporting a university student as part of a summer research scholarship. A research grant of \$NZ5000, provided by GNS,

will be awarded to a University of Canterbury student to explore the research question from November through January. The results of the project will be presented to COMNAP Members at the end of the project. It’s an exciting and valuable opportunity for a senior University student to research an Antarctic topic, which will result in practical information for COMNAP Member National Antarctic Programs.



## Recent visitors to the COMNAP Secretariat

Valery Lukin, RAE Director, visited Christchurch in July 2010 to attend the “Politics of Antarctica Seminar” which was held at the University of Canterbury. Here, Valery and Michelle take a break from the seminar to informally discuss COMNAP issues. Also, as part of the Antarctic Research Season Opening Function, the city of Christchurch hosted a weekend of Antarctic-related events. As part of that weekend, the COMNAP Secretariat opened its doors to a range of distinguished visitors, including, H.E. Caroline Chretien (High Commissioner, Canada), Mr. Nathan Goldstein (Third Secretary, Australian High Commission), Ms. Silke Roefer (Deputy Head of Mission, Germany), H.E. Andrey Tatarinov (Ambassador, Russian Federation) and Mr. Jorge Valenzuela (First Secretary, Chilean Embassy).

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