Agenda Item: 11.4

Person Responsible: Person who will present

XXXI SCAR Delegates Meeting

Buenos Aires, Argentina, 9-11 August 2010

Application for funding for a workshop to commence development of the Antarctic Conservation for the 21st Century Strategy

Executive Summary

Title: Application for funding for a workshop to commence development of the Antarctic Conservation for the 21st Century Strategy

Authors: Chief Officer, Standing Committee on the Antarctic Treaty System

Relevant URLs or references to other reports: See Reports of the SCAR Observers to the Treaty and SCAR's Working and Information Papers submitted to the Treaty Meetings over the past four years.

Introduction/ Background: The Standing Committee on the Antarctic Treaty System (SC-ATS) and a variety of other observers and experts provide advice to the Committee for Environmental Protection on conservation and conservation science in the Antarctic region. The extent of the advice has increased recently, with papers from SCAR on approach distances, persistent organic pollutants, Southern Giant Petrel, invasive alien species, bioprospecting and the relationship between the Antarctic environmental domains and terrestrial biodiversity data.

Important Issues or Factors: Much of the advice provided by SCAR and others has been provided in a piecemeal fashion. Moreover, the only integrated document for conservation in the region is c. 20 years old, and much has changed since it was produced, making it wholly outdated. An urgent need exists for an integrated strategy for conservation and conservation-related research in the region.

Recommendations/Actions and Justification: Additional funding of US$ 10 000 towards the first workshop (South Africa, May/June 2011) to commence the development of a conservation and conservation science strategy entitled '*Antarctic Conservation in the 21st Century*'. Such a document will provide much needed advice to the Committee for Environmental Protection and the Antarctic Treaty Consultative Parties, and will ensure that SCAR continues to provide the most current advice in this arena to the Treaty.

Expected Benefits/Outcomes: Integrated advice on conservation and conservation science priorities that draws on best practices from elsewhere and which continues to provide leadership in the science into policy arena in the Antarctic Treaty System.

Partners: The Centre for Invasion Biology in South Africa will coordinate the first workshop, which will also be supported (in principle agreement thus far) by New Zealand, South Africa, the Centre for Invasion Biology, SC-ATS funds, and a donation (US$ 20 000 received).

Budget Implications: US$ 10 000 in 2011.

Antarctic Conservation for the 21st Century

A Consortium Activity Led by the Scientific Committee on Antarctic Research

Background

Antarctica and its surrounding ocean and islands, referred to by the Antarctic Treaty as 'associated and dependent ecosystems', are among the areas on the planet least influenced by human activities. This is true especially for terrestrial/fresh water systems because large-scale whaling and sealing in the past, and fishing now, have had and continue to have substantial impacts on the marine ecosystems of the Southern Ocean.

Based on historical and projected future resource use, the region is facing a multitude of conservation challenges that require a coherent framework for conservation. Among the more notable pressures are changing climate and ice dynamics in some regions; a growth in the intensity and frequency of science and tourist activities (especially in the Peninsula region); the introduction of non-native species; and the spread of those non-native species that have already taken hold. For marine systems, fishing activities and a growing interest in krill harvesting pose growing stresses that are important challenges to environmental stewardship efforts.

The Committee for Environmental Protection (CEP), established under the Protocol on Environmental Protection to the Antarctic Treaty, is responsible for advising the Antarctic Treaty Consultative Parties (ATPs) on conservation in the region. In turn, the CEP often seeks advice from the Antarctic Treaty Parties, Observers and Experts to the Treaty, and those with an interest in the region. Beyond the ATPs, these include the Commission of the Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources (CCAMLR), the Scientific Committee on Antarctic Research (SCAR), the Committee of Managers of National Antarctic Programmes (COMNAP), the Agreement on the Conservation of Albatrosses and Petrels (ACAP), the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), the International Association of Antarctica Tour Operators (IAATO), and the Antarctic and Southern Oceans Coalition (ASOC).

In recent years, it has become clear that many of the challenges facing conservation in the Antarctic region can learn and apply lessons from similar situations elsewhere. These include the ways to best limit the introduction of non-indigenous marine and terrestrial species, the kinds of information required to minimize and detect intra-continental transfers of propagules, considered alien introductions given the size and biogeography of Antarctica, the ways in which Specially Protected Areas and Marine Protected Areas (ASPAs and MPAs) should be designated to protect the full range of Antarctic biodiversity given changing natural and human activities, and the need to determine what conservation threats on the horizon are not currently being considered. How climate change will influence these considerations is an additional complexity that is a matter of great interest.

Together with several other organizations and ATPs, SCAR has been providing advice to the CEP and to the Antarctic Treaty Consultative Meetings regarding various aspects of these issues. However, no recent attempt has been made to integrate this advice using management approaches based on state-of-the-art conservation practices that are addressing similar questions elsewhere in the world. The most recent effort to do so produced an IUCN publication entitled '*A Strategy for Antarctic Conservation*' which was published *c*. 20 years ago.

Proposal

It is proposed that a set of best-practice guidelines and priorities for conservation and research in the region in support of these efforts be developed through a series of workshops. Several steps are envisaged to accomplish the goal of providing an updated conservation and conservation science strategy for Antarctica. The primary target audience would be the Committee for Environmental Protection and SCAR member countries that propose and implement conservation practices and fund conservation-related research in the region. The steps envisaged include:

1. A first workshop (late May/early June 2011, in South Africa) will bring together the most knowledgeable conservation science and practice experts from outside the region, in collaboration with expertise from among those working within the region. The ultimate objective will be to consider and develop best-practices for addressing the challenges faced by conservation in the Antarctic. During these deliberations it is also expected that the science needed to support these efforts will be identified. This first workshop will develop a consensus prioritization of issues and initially consider the very highest priority needs. It is expected that a series of workshops over several years may be needed to address all of the issues involved. The issues for consideration will include, but not be limited to:

- Protocols to ensure that conservation and assessment of conservation progress is evidence-based as far as practicable, and how to proceed in the absence of evidence.
- Selection of Specially Protected Areas (or Marine Protected Areas) in the absence of complete biodiversity information and given human use of the region.
- Methods of assessing risks to diversity and documenting change given combinations of increasing tourist numbers and a changing climate, within the limitations of financial and human resources, bearing in mind the spatial and temporal scales most relevant to Antarctica.
- Methods of detecting introduced species when many of these are small invertebrates or microorganisms including introductions from one area of the Antarctic to another.
- Risk assessment and supply chain management from ports of departure to minimize introduction of alien species.
- Distinguishing 'non-human assisted' from 'human-assisted' colonization and establishment events.
- Decision-making protocols for eradication of established populations and assessment of the consequences of such actions.
- Designation of and Conservation Plans for Specially Protected Species.
- Horizon-scanning to determine emerging conservation challenges.

2. Production of a revised conservation strategy that addresses best practice in each area and identifies key research and implementation requirements.

3. Delivery of a provisional strategy entitled '*Antarctic Conservation for the 21st Century*' to the CEP. It is expected that this first workshop will outline the essential steps for producing this strategy and a timeline to address remaining questions. SCAR will maintain the document online in a format that will allow for continuing comment after the first workshop.

An important foundational exercise for the workshop will be to review critically the lessons learned from Antarctic conservation efforts to date and consider these lessons in a global context.