

REPORT FROM ATS STANDING COMMITTEE ON ATCM XXVIII

Introduction

ATCM XXVIII took place in Stockholm from -17 June 2005. J.Thiede, DWH Walton, C Summerhayes, PD Clarkson and M Kaczmarska attended on behalf of SCAR. The SCAR delegation also hosted D Carlson, Executive Director of the IPY Programme Office during the second week. Prof Steven Chown came for three days in the first week to deliver the SCAR Lecture.

The meeting took place in the Technical Museum and was very well organised by the Swedish Ministry of Foreign Affairs. It proved to be a very busy meeting with 72 Working papers and 125 Information Papers, the bulk of which were taken by the Committee for Environmental Protection.

SCAR Papers

SCAR submitted two working papers, and three information papers. These were prepared in advance and almost all circulated to National Committees, Chief Officers and the SCAR Executive for comment before submission. The Expert Group on Birds and the Expert Group on Seals both played a major part in preparing material for the two working papers.

This year there were record numbers of papers for consideration at the CEP. Of the 98 papers listed for the CEP there were 37 Working Papers. To ensure that all these were adequately dealt with the Chair only exceptionally allowed discussion of Information Papers.

The most significant papers were those on Specially Protected Species. SCAR had been asked to provide an example of how an endangered species could be described for listing in the Appendix to Annex 2, and had also been asked to examine the case for the continued listing of Fur Seals and the Ross Seal.

The discussion on listing was very positive with respect to SCAR recommendations and developed a breakout group, led by New Zealand, that designed a process for submission of a case, its progress through the ATS, and the way in which a final decision on listing could be taken. This group also recommended the SCAR requirement that every SPS must have an Action Plan for recovery of the population. The CEP endorsed the use of the IUCN criteria for assessing endangerment, agreed that any species assessed as Vulnerable or above should be assessed for listing and accepted the new submission process and the guidelines for the Action Plan. SCAR was requested to submit cases for the Southern Giant Petrel and the Macaroni Penguin for consideration at the next meeting. Parties seem to be determined to go ahead with listing a species once a case is suggested and arguing out the acceptable Action Plan in later years.

The paper on delisting of Fur Seals fared less well. It was clear from the discussions that some Parties were unhappy about the principle of delisting species once the populations had recovered. There were several helpful interventions accepting the

data that SCAR had submitted, agreeing that this was a conservation success and accepting that the species should be delisted. However, there were interventions from other Parties who suggested that the Expert Group on Seals had not used all the available data, that the threats to the species were not adequately documented, that *Arctocephalus tropicalis* had not returned to its pre-hunting levels and that there were some inconsistencies in the text. ASOC also circulated a suggestion in ECO that the UK had plans for culling the seals which was why SCAR was recommending delisting. This last suggestion brought a very strong comment from the UK. The result of all this was that SCAR was asked to resubmit the case next meeting using the newly agreed process and taking into account the range of comments. SCAR also agreed that as it expected that the analysis of the APIS data would have been completed and it would by then be in a position to comment on the status of the Ross Seal.

The SCAR Report took a new form this year with both details of the re-organised structure, the science plans for the five new programmes and a selection of science highlights from each discipline. Since this was presented by the President as an introduction to the SCAR lecture there was no possibility of questions or discussion on the content.

The Information Paper on Biodiversity, provided in support of the SCAR Lecture, was taken in the Operational Working Group. It attracted considerable interest and SCAR was asked to revise it to include comments on microbial introductions and resubmit it next year as a Working Paper for the CEP for more substantive discussion.

David Carlson introduced the IPY report before any other papers on IPY. The following discussion indicated that the ATCM would like a paper/presentation from the IPY Programme Office next year on the extent of the programmes endorsed by the Joint Committee. The CEP has also requested a paper dealing more specifically with the potential environmental impacts associated with the increased activities whilst the Tourism Working Group is likely to become concerned over an increase in tourists stimulated by the IPY. At the behest of the UK the ATCM is intending to send a formal invitation to the IPY Joint Committee for the Edinburgh ATCM and so SCAR will not be required to provide for IPY on its delegation.

SCAR Lecture

The lecture this year was by Steven Chown on Biodiversity. It was scheduled on the Wednesday morning as a Plenary and was attended by the King. The lecture was outstanding and was very well received and the reception afterwards provided an excellent opportunity to talk about SCAR work. However, despite the excellent scheduling there were two problems: the lecture theatre could only hold 200 so quite a number of participants could not be admitted, and the Liability Working Group decided to continue with their discussions thus ensuring that none of the lawyers attended. SCAR was specifically thanked for both its presentations by the Chairman in his concluding remarks.

Other Papers

After years of negotiation the ATCM finally agreed Annex VI on Liability. This already has some importance for SCAR as there were attempts to introduce a resolution dealing with the potential for repair of environmental damage, requesting SCAR and COMNAP to provide a scientific and technical report as soon as practicable. Although this was finally reduced to report language it is likely to appear again next year as a formal resolution.

A very large number of ASPA Management Plans (principally revisions of plans for existing areas) were agreed as was the ASMA Management Plan for Deception Island. New ASMA proposals were tabled for the Larsemann Hills and South Pole, and it was agreed that the ASMA Plan for Admiralty Bay (which preceded the formation of the CEP) should be reconsidered in the light of significant changes. At this point India announced it would be building a new station in the Larsemann Hills. Ukraine put forward its first ASPA proposal for Peterman Island. The CEP has now decided that it can only deal with the management plans by establishing a standing committee that will attempt to do what SCAR originally did with such plans!

Work by Germany and Chile on an ASMA for Fildes Peninsula will be taken forward by two workshops organised by Germany in late 2005 and early 2006 to which Observers are specifically invited. The ATCM also revised the criteria under which it would be decided when a protected area had a sufficient marine component for it to be referred to CCAMLR for comment.

There was extensive discussion of the latest stage of the environmental domain analysis being developed by New Zealand as an independent tool for identifying the range of habitats throughout the continent and SCAR was asked to help with improving it. New Zealand also tabled an interesting analysis of the objectives of existing ASPA management plans that provided a further indication of the lack of any strategic planning for the selection of areas.

The report from the ICG on environmental monitoring together with other papers on monitoring initiated a discussion about the proliferation of ICGs and the problems of contributing. The result was to extend the life of the present ICG by another year and revise its terms of reference to include those of the State of the Environment Reporting ICG. SCAR seems to have acquired a continuing responsibility for providing temperature data for the SAER. The brief SCAR report on the Texas workshop passed unremarked but that was probably because interested Parties already knew that a full report on relevant aspects would be provided next year. COMNAP provided a paper on practical guidelines for environmental monitoring which was endorsed by the ATCM.

Papers on quarantine and introductions through ballast water exchange stimulated a more general discussion on introductions to the Antarctic that linked well to the SCAR lecture. The scientific basis for any future recommendations needs critical examination and New Zealand offered to host a scientific workshop on this topic next year. They requested that SCAR be involved in planning this.

A novelty this year was the discussion of a strategic plan for the CEP. Breakout discussions provided both a list of future objectives and one of core deliverables. This

has so enthused Parties that the UK is to hold a pre-CEP workshop on strategic planning next year. To progress this a CEP Steering Committee has been established.

ASOC provided two papers of note. The first attempted to draw together recent key papers on climate change from the primary literature, principally using the original summaries to indicate their relevance. This had been done with the assistance of some US scientists and was a new way of drawing attention to progress in this field. A second paper dealt with marine acoustics and drew attention to a number of recent publications, many of which were either posters or in the grey literature but did include some important recent peer reviewed papers that are potentially relevant to the Southern Ocean. Neither drew substantive discussion.

Considerable time was spent on presentations and discussions of the draft CEEs for the redevelopment of Halley and Neumayer, and there were major inspection reports from Australia of Ross Island facilities and UK, Peru and Australia of Antarctic Peninsula facilities. Of the recommendations from the UK there were two that concerned SCAR. The first was that Parties should co-operate better on scientific research, ensure scientific priorities were addressed in an effective manner and that duplication of work is minimised. In addition it was suggested that SCAR should undertake an in-situ audit of scientific research in order to comment on this. Several Parties expressed concern about such an audit and SCAR noted that any consideration of these would be undertaken by the Executive..

In the Working Group on Operational Affairs there were few Working Papers but some interesting IPs. Details were provided on the development of new stations for Belgium and India as well as the announcement that Rumania has signed an agreement with Australia to use Law Base for the next 10 years. Argentina suggested that it would be expanding work in the Dallman Laboratory at Jubany.

After a brief introduction to the SCAR Biodiversity paper there were several interventions by Parties commenting on the quality of the lecture. UK and Chile requested that it be revised to include some mention of microbial introductions and resubmitted next year to the CEP as a Working paper. In response to questions SCAR outlined why it had embarked with IUCN on a revision of the Antarctic Conservation Strategy and noted that it would provide information on progress to the CEP when appropriate.

Bioprospecting was an agenda item but was taken in the Legal & Institutional Working Group and the Parties indicated that they intend to treat this primarily as a legal matter in future.

Conclusions

This was another very successful year for SCAR at the ATCM. The major papers we prepared were submitted on time and well received by the Parties. It is not surprising that the proposal to delist the fur seals did not succeed immediately given that there was no established process for doing this. The lecture and reception were judged an outstanding success, although the lack of interest from the lawyers is depressing. The delivery of the IPY report stimulated considerable informal discussion for David Carlson and allowed him to make many useful contacts. We have been tasked in a

variety of ways to deliver papers for the next meeting – a clear indication of the value placed on SCAR's independent advice.

Finally, SCAR have been formally invited to provide another lecture on relevant scientific issues to XXIX ATCM.

DWH Walton
21 June 2005

Annex 1

SCAR papers submitted to XXVIII ATCM

IP Biological monitoring of human impacts in the Antarctic
IP Biodiversity in the Antarctic
IP SCAR REPORT TO XXVIII ATCM

WP Proposal to List a Species as a Specially Protected Species under Annex II
WP De-listing Antarctic Specially Protected Species

IP Report on the International Polar Year (for IPY)