

THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE ATS STANDING COMMITTEE

The view from the Chair

Introduction

The ATS Standing Committee was established as part of the re-organisation of SCAR and was intended to replace many of the functions that GOSEAC had previously provided. The membership was fixed at three (DWH Walton, MC Kennicutt, M Stoddart) with the assumption that the tasks were principally ones of co-ordination of material prepared by specialists within SCAR for submission to the elements of the ATS. The Chair of the ATS Committee was tasked with providing the presentation of the papers at the ATCM and more general representation of the SCAR community at both the CEP and the ATCM generally, as well as working with the chosen lecturer to ensure the quality and content of the SCAR Lecture. Representation of SCAR at CCAMLR remained with E.Fanta.

With the retirement of DWH Walton after XXIX ATCM in Edinburgh this is an opportune moment to look at the future development of the Committee and how representation of SCAR interests and advice can most effectively be delivered in the future.

Membership

Whilst the present three members have worked well together, not least because all three are familiar with the way in which the ATCM works and Kennicutt and Stoddart are normally there as part of the delegations of the USA and Australia, this may not always be the case. In addition there has continued to be poor linkage with CCAMLR.

The expertise of the three members has not been sufficient to provide the balance that was previously provided by the more diverse membership of GOSEAC but there has been progressive engagement with the scientific Standing Groups. All three Groups have now nominated three people who will be prepared to provide expert assistance in their discipline to the ATS Committee.

It is my recommendation that:

- the SCAR representative on CCAMLR is made a member of the ATS Standing Committee
- the Chair of the ATS continues to be a biologist
- another member is added to the ATS Standing Committee to broaden its geographical and disciplinary representation

I would suggest that my replacement as Chair should be by Steven Chown from South Africa if he is willing to undertake the task. In addition I would propose that Sergio Marensi from Argentina could be added to the Committee to increase its expertise (adding geosciences) and geographical coverage. Both these people already have some familiarity with the ATCM system. This would then provide a committee with representatives from USA, South Africa, Argentina and Australia and a range of science backgrounds including environmental monitoring, terrestrial ecology, marine biology and geology. In terms of costs there would be no change as this Committee has never been funded to meet and does most of its work by email.

To cover the problems associated with change I would further suggest that the Executive look for further replacements in due course of Stoddart and Kennicutt to introduce more SCAR scientists to the political realities of international representation.

In selecting scientists to appoint I would make an important point to the Executive. The Head of the SCAR CEP Delegation **must** not only be well informed about SCAR's role and activities but must also be prepared to provide the necessary level of interventions in what at times has been a hostile climate. The aim is not to be either aggressive or confrontational but simply to ensure that the SCAR position and evidence is heard and understood, which can at times be quite difficult to achieve. There are a number of countries whose scientists are traditionally reticent about such positive tactics and, whatever the apparent advantages there might appear to be in appointing from these countries, it is essential to ensure that they do have the both the resolve and the diplomacy to represent SCAR adequately.

Role of the Chair of the ATS Standing Committee

The future Chair may have different views to those of the present Chair, but I thought it worth setting out the duties as I have attempted to discharge them.

I have attempted to ensure broad understanding of SCAR's activities by reading all the official documents, by reading the reports of the Expert Groups and the science plans of the Standing Scientific Groups. In addition I have normally visited the meetings of each of the science groups every two years and briefed them on relevant ATCM matters.

I have taken the responsibility for either drafting, editing or polishing all the papers submitted to the ATCM.

I have initiated and, where necessary, run SCAR workshops to provide a synthesis of the topical advice needed for future Treaty meetings.

I have organised comments, where necessary, for CEP Intersessional Contact Groups.

I have provided a report on the ATCM and a workplan for the ATS Standing Committee for the forthcoming year.

The circulation of draft ATCM papers through the SCAR system has been undertaken by the SCAR Office. This is an essential part of the consultation process in advance of submission to the ATCM but, because of the timetable for submission of Working Papers in particular, is proving very difficult to achieve effectively.

Attendance at the ATS meetings

I suggest that the normal expectation for attendance at an ATCM would be the Executive Director for 2 weeks, Head of CEP delegation for 1 week, SCAR speaker 2-3 days, President 1-2 days. This would ensure the following:

- the presentation of the SCAR Report is by the President who would also have the opportunity of “showing the flag” to all the Parties
- there are two people present for the busiest part of the period which is the CEP meeting
- the Executive Director would be present throughout and would be expected to cover all the science questions raised in the second week as well as providing a check on the discussions of the CEP report in Plenary on the second Monday
- the speaker has an opportunity to gain some insight into the mechanisms of the ATCM!

However the ATS committee is structured in future it is essential that the head of the CEP delegation is a senior biologist with a good overview of all SCAR biological and environmental activities. The SCAR Executive will need to decide who should in future be the Head of the SCAR Delegation. At present it is the Chair of the ATS Standing Committee but it may be better to change this to the Executive Director in future to ensure continuity of approach.

At XXIX ATCM in Edinburgh it will be essential to ensure that the new Chair of the ATS Standing Committee is there to begin to understand how the system works and what will be required the following year in India.

Whilst it is clearly valuable for the Executive Director to gain some direct insight now into the workings of the CCAMLR Scientific Committee, for example by attending the CCAMLR meeting in 2006, on a continuing basis the representation should be by an expert in the relevant fields and one whose attendance will not require significant expenditure. Graham Hosie should be asked if he will continue to undertake this role.

Finance

The present budget allocation of \$10,000 per year has so far proved adequate to cover the costs of the ATS Committee. This is on the continuing assumption that it is not normally used to pay for attendance at the ATCM or CCAMLR but is used principally to support attendance at and the organisation of workshops on key topics such as marine acoustics or alien species.

WORK PLAN FOR 2005-2006

It is intended to hold an open SCAR workshop to review recent relevant data on the effects of anthropogenic noise in the Southern Ocean. The workshop is expected to be in late February 2006 probably at the University of Cadiz in Spain. It will also attempt to use the outcomes of another closed workshop being organised in October in the UK by marine mammal specialists to discuss the priorities for an international research agenda.

Support has been offered to AntarcticaNewZealand for the workshop they are proposing to hold in early March 2006 in Christchurch, New Zealand, on the risks posed by the introduction of non-native species to the Antarctic (biosecurity).

It has been agreed that SCAR will endeavour to provide a scientific review of the “proof of concept” framework developed by Harry Keys for the Systematic Environmental-Geographic Framework he has created using environmental domains analysis.

The Expert Group on Birds will need to provide a revised version of the paper on Southern Giant Petrel and a new proposal for listing of Macaroni Penguin. There will be a need to develop an outline Action Plan for each as part of the submissions. In addition the Expert Group needs to draft an IP on the outcome of their meetings of Important Bird Areas in the Antarctic.

The Expert Group on Seals will need to work on a revision of the proposal to delist Fur Seals, to ensure that all the available data are included, to put it into the new format and also provide an analysis of the status of the Ross Seal from the total APIS data.

The ATS Committee needs to work with the chosen SCAR lecturer to ensure that the content of the lecture is at the right level and that the supporting IP is submitted on time. In addition Steven Chown needs to be asked to revise his paper into a Working paper for formal discussion at the next meeting.

Chair of the Committee should draft papers on the potential for the introduction of alien species through ballast water and hull fouling, and on the introduction of alien species on marine debris to provide scientific data for this agenda item next year (if this is not adequately covered by the New Zealand workshop).

Joint IP needs to be agreed with COMNAP on the outcomes of the Texas workshop on biological monitoring of human impacts and the 2 volumes of the report should be sent to every delegation.

An informal approach from NZ and USA asked if we could check on how useful JCADM could be for the CEP in locating data it needed for monitoring and management. It might be helpful to provide a short IP on this if the answer from the forthcoming meeting in Buenos Aires is positive.

Proposed papers for ATCM XXIX

At present it is envisaged that SCAR will submit 7 WPs and 4 IPs to the next ATCM. Since the meeting will begin on 5 June 2006 the last submission date for WPs will be around 1 May and for IPs around 15 May 2006.

- WP - Proposal to list Southern Giant Petrel as Specially Protected Species
- WP - Proposal to list Macaroni Penguin as Specially Protected Species
- WP – Proposal to delist Fur Seals (*Arctocephalus*) as Specially Protected Species
- WP – Proposal on the future of the SPS category for the Ross Seal
- WP – Review of current scientific knowledge on the possible effects of anthropogenic noise in Antarctic marine ecosystem
- WP – Important Bird Areas as a conservation tool for identifying areas in need of protection

WP – Introduction of non-native marine species through ballast water and hull fouling?

WP – Biodiversity [Parties requested this IP underpinning the SCAR Lecture be resubmitted to CEP as a WP]

IP – SCAR Report

IP – [in support of the SCAR lecture]

IP – Importance of marine debris in the introduction of non-native species?

IP – Recommendations from the workshop on biological monitoring of human impacts (joint with COMNAP)

IP – Data Management relevant to the work of the CEP ?

FUTURE PROJECTS

The success of the Arctic Climate Impact Assessment has not gone unnoticed by a considerable number of the delegates at the meeting. One Party in particular considers that the IPY could offer an opportunity for starting a more formal Antarctic Climate Impact Assessment with SCAR as the co-ordinating body. We have adopted a similar position to before in that the extra costs of undertaking this must be funded and a minimum figure of \$250,000 was suggested as a basis for discussion with the expectation that the cost would be shared between a number of Parties. If we did go ahead with a lecture on Antarctic Climate Change next year it could be a good point to suggest this as a possible outcome.

There has always been the potential for SCAR to propose new protected areas under Annex II legislation but previously the SCAR Executive has considered that this is primarily an activity for Parties and that such a proposal might generate a backlash from particular Parties. I do not believe that to be the case and indeed such a proposal with a strong scientific case would now continue to enhance our reputation. If there is still lingering concern in the SCAR Executive then the proposal could be done jointly with a Party. Current research is now throwing up new areas that need protection (for example nunataks with the simplest ecosystems in the world) and we could also address the fact that water bodies (both fresh and saline) are still not adequately covered.

Whilst the proposals on the two Specially Protected Species deal with the first key bird species there are several others breeding on the subantarctic islands but foraging further south that need protection on the basis of the IUCN criteria. SCAR has already listed them in the earlier paper. The aim should be to provide proposals for all species in the endangered list within the next three years.

SCAR has already embarked on developing a new conservation strategy for the 21st century that is based firmly on scientific criteria and needs rather than legal or geographical boundaries. The intention is to engage with IUCN Antarctic Advisory Committee after the Curitiba meeting to develop the outline document jointly through to acceptance and publication. This will involve engaging with interested parties including CEP, CCAMLR, IWC and ACAP although it is not expected that they would formally wish to sponsor the document.

The UK/Australia/Peru Inspection report made two suggestions about science. Firstly that there was ample evidence of a lack of collaboration and co-ordination between

countries which should be addressed. Secondly that SCAR should be asked to undertake an in-situ audit of the quality of science throughout the Antarctic. The Executive may wish to formally respond to this.

The Liability Regime has now been agreed as Annex VI and although it might take many years to be ratified by all the Parties it is likely they will assume acceptance and application from now on. The discussions this year suggest that next year SCAR and COMNAP will be formally asked to undertake joint work to provide advice on the possibilities of repairing or restoring damaged or destroyed component of ecosystems. How this will be done remains to be discussed.

DWH Walton
21 June 2005