The Fifth Turkish Antarctic Expedition (TAE-V)

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Information Paper submitted by Turkey

Summary

This paper presents information on the organization and the conducted activities in the fifth Turkish Antarctic Expedition (TAE-V) in 2020/2021 Antarctic season.

Background

Turkey has been organizing scientific Antarctic expeditions since 2017 to increase the scientific knowledge and experience in the national science community. Considerable work has been carried out in the former 4 expeditions including the establishment of a research camp, automatic weather station and Global Navigational Satellite System (GNSS) stations. COVID-19 pandemic inevitably impacted the national Antarctic research activities remarkably. In 2020/2021 Antarctic season, Turkey organized a compact Antarctic expedition to mitigate these effects and to provide the sustainability of former research activities.

The Expedition

The fifth Turkish Antarctic Expedition (TAE-V) was organized in 2020-2021 Antarctic season with a limited number of researchers by taking all necessary health measures. The researchers were vaccinated (two doses) for COVID-19 and used FFP3 masks, face shields, and hands sanitizers during their flights to Antarctica from Turkey. Besides, they were isolated on their arrival for 14 days as a quarantine procedure. After this period, no symptoms were observed and the expedition started from King George Island to Horseshoe Island in West Antarctic Peninsula.

During the expedition, data retrieval and maintenance operations of automatic weather station and Global Navigational Satellite System (GNSS) stations were carried out on Horseshoe and Dismal Islands of Marguerite Bay. In addition to these, biodiversity observations were made on the Island and physicochemical characteristics of the water bodies were measured.

Conclusion

Despite the risks involved, TAE-V was completed without any problems and the planned activities were carried out successfully. For obvious reasons, the expedition could not host any researchers from other countries. Hoping that the pandemic will be eradicated soon, Turkey intends to compensate this deficiency in international cooperation in the upcoming expeditions.