Tourism Management Policy for Esperanza Antarctic Station

English version provided by the author

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**Information paper presented by Argentina**

Background

In 2010 Argentina presented Working Paper 49 “Proposal for the elaboration of guidelines for stations that receive visitors” in order to promote Parties to elaborate guidelines for tourist visits to the stations managed by them.

As a result of debates, many Parties supported the proposal that stations should have written policies related to visitors (paragraph 245 Final Report XXXIII Antarctic Treaty Consultative Meeting (ATCM)). Through the IP 86 “Tourism Management Policy for Carlini Scientific Station” of the XXXVII ATCM and IP 131 “Tourism Management Policy for Brown Scientific Station” of the XXXVII ATCM, Argentina presented its guidelines for the above mentioned stations.

The different guidelines that Parties have been communicating to regulate visits to their Antarctic stations, have been incorporated to the IAATO “Field Operations Manual”, in order to apply them during visits to those facilities by their associated operators and individuals. Argentina would appreciate that these guidelines also be included in the referred Manual.

Esperanza Antarctic Station

Esperanza Station (63˚24'S, 56˚59'W) is a permanent Argentine facility, located in the homonymous bay, at the northeastern tip of the Antarctic Peninsula, on the western margin of the Antarctic Sound, precisely along the coastal strip of Punta Foca in the middle between Aguila Cove to the west and Choza Cove to the east. It was founded on 17 December 1952 and has been in continuous operation ever since.

It is currently the Argentine station where important natural, scientific, historical and educational values are concentrated in the same area. This situation results in the development of numerous research projects covering various subjects, including studies on glaciology and permafrost, geology, seismology, birds (penguins and skuas), physiology, monitoring of the ecosystem, geodesy, historical heritage, meteorology, etc. Some of the highlights of the area include the presence of Historic Sites and Monuments Nos. 39 and 40, the significant geological heritage that make up the 148 Monte Flora ASPA, the Gentoo and Adelie penguin colonies - the latter considered one of the largest colonies on the Antarctic Peninsula, with more than 100,000 breeding pairs, has been monitored since 1995, the LRA 36 Radio Station "Radio Nacional Arcángel San Gabriel", the Gustavo Giro Tapper Museum, the Saint Francis of Assisi Chapel and the Provincial School No. 38, President Raúl Ricardo Alfonsín.

The station also has a permanent seismograph, in cooperation with the Italian Antarctic Programme, and points of geodetic importance such as the SPRZ Permanent GNSS station.

Although the climatic conditions of each summer could complicate landings in the area, Esperanza Station and the homonymous bay, according to statistics, are among the sites chosen by tour operators. In recent years, the number of visitors, according to records published by IAATO, has averaged 2,500 visitors per season, with summers recording even higher numbers.

While research is carried out throughout the year, it is during the summer when both scientific and tourist activities coincide with the period of conditioning and cleaning of the facilities and the surrounding area and, consequently, the number of people at the station increases.

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In this context of intensification of activities carried out at the station, and taking into account the scientific activity of each season, Argentina has decided to implement a regulated reception of visits, in order to ensure that all the activities carried out there do not interfere with each other.

This has also been assessed in line with Recommendation XVIII-1 (1994) “Tourism Guidelines”, Resolution 5 (2007) “Tourism in the Area of the Antarctic Treaty”, Resolution 7 (2009) “General principles of Antarctic Tourism”, la Resolution 4 (2007) “Maritime tourism”, among others. Likewise, Measure 15 (2009) “Disembarkation of people from passenger vessels in the Area of the Antarctic Treaty”, already ratified by Argentina, although not yet in force, was also considered.

The guidelines annexed to this document, aim at regulating visits to Esperanza Station, preserving both the scientific and logistic activities being undertaken, as well as the environmental and historical values of the area, while allowing a safe visit of tourists to the area of the station facilities. These guidelines apply to the station facilities while Esperanza bay area and the zodiac type boat rides that take place therein are excluded.

Informative talks on the environmental and historical values and station activities by assigned station personnel will complement the guidelines for visitors, allowing for a better experience during the visit.

Compliance with the guidelines should be observed by all visitors requesting a visit to Esperanza Station, whether it is carried out as part of an activity organised by an IAATO member operator or an independent operator.

The visitor guidelines are hereby notified and we request it be incorporated into the IAATO Field Operations Manual. It is also requested that those Parties or Competent Authorities evaluating tourism activities that include a visit to Esperanza Station, inform the organizers of activities of these guidelines, at the same time as notifying the Argentine Antarctic Programme.

The guidelines will be reviewed every time it is considered relevant, and updates and new versions will be appropriately informed.