Report from Asian Forum of Polar Sciences to the ATCM XLIV

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Introduction

Since the establishment of the Asian Forum for Polar Sciences (AFoPS) in 2004, AFoPS currently consists of six members – China, Japan, India, Malaysia, the Republic of Korea and Thailand. The AFoPS, an 18 year old Asian organisation dedicated to the advancement of polar sciences among its members aims to encourage and facilitate cooperation through human and information exchange, research collaboration, and logistic cooperation among Asian polar science institutions. This report is prepared to update the new developments of the Asian Forum for Polar Sciences (AFoPS) since the last ATCM.

***Chair of AFoPS***

The Chair of AFoPS is rotated among the members with a two-year term of service. Malaysia has taken over the role as the Chair for 2021-2022 from Japan. The Chair of AFoPS hosts and organise the Annual General Meeting (AGM) and any meetings needed to discuss the matters of members’ common interests. The AFoPS Secretariat from Malaysia has been tasked to strengthen information-sharing among members, initiate collaboration with other international organisations and facilitate its future planning.

***AFoPS Webinar: Opportunities and Capacity Building***

In conjunction with the 9th Malaysian International Seminar on Antarctica (MISA9) and the 2021 AFoPS Annual General Meeting, a webinar was held online on 25 October 2021 to introduce the available opportunities and capacity building programs including fellowship, scholarship, training, visiting scientist program and collaborative projects. Seven speakers from the Korea Polar Research Institute, the National Institute of Polar Research of Japan, the National Centre for Polar and Ocean Research of India, Polar Research Institute of China, Sultan Mizan Antarctic Research Foundation, Scientific Committee on Antarctic Research, and International Arctic Science Committee have presented in the webinar.

***2021 AFoPS Annual General Meeting***

The Annual General Meeting was held online on 28-29 October 2021. Due to the Covid-19 situation and travel restrictions, the members met virtually for the two days meeting. Prof Azizan Abu Samah, the Director of the National Antarctic Research Centre, as the Chair of AFoPS opened the meeting and welcomed the participants. 38 participants from AFoPS members countries along with four representatives from the Australian Antarctic Division, Iranian National Institute for Oceanography and Atmospheric Science, and TÜBİTAK MAM Polar Research Institute as observers attended the meeting. The members presented their national reports, including updates on each national program. These include the overview of the operational, logistics and their research plan. Six researchers presented the recent development of their research projects that are worthwhile to share with other members, followed by the presentations by the observers on their polar science-related activities. As usual, the meeting also covered sessions on the exchange program, AFoPS publication, cooperation with other international organisations and a closed business meeting to discuss and deliberate important items.

***Memorandum of Understanding between SCAR, IASC and AFoPS***

At the 2021 AFoPS Annual General Meeting, the President of the Scientific Committee on Antarctic Research (SCAR), Dr Yeadong Kim, the President of the International Arctic Science Committee (IASC), Prof Larry Hinzman and the Chair of AFoPS, Prof Azizan Abu Samah, renewed the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between the three organisations. Through the MoU, the organisations recognise the common goal of working internationally on polar science and technology to increase understanding of Earth's Polar Regions and their connections to the global system.

The purpose of the present MoU is to foster cooperation between IASC, SCAR and the AFoPS members, and to lay the foundation for a joint effort in developing international programs and initiatives based on scientific priorities, scientific excellence and shared use of Asian Antarctic and Arctic infrastructures for scientific and technological purposes, as well as increasing the engagement of Asian scientists in both IASC and SCAR activities. The MoU is for a term of 5 years and follows the initial MoU between the organisations, signed in 2016.

***AFoPS Special Meeting at ASSW 2022***

The AFoPS Special Meeting was held online on 28 March 2022 during the ASSW 2022 with 28 participants from six member countries. The main agendas for this meeting were the updates on each member's programs, ongoing AFoPS activities and future plans, followed by a discussion on the main issues that need decisions and deliberations from the members. It was announced in the meeting that the next Annual General Meeting will be held in Kuala Lumpur in October 2022.

***Conclusion***

The Asian polar research community has been growing and with the expansion in the research infrastructure and investments among the Asian polar programs, we hope this will further increase the collaboration and cooperation with others. As an exclusive regional group, AFoPS is determined to be part of the international community and hope this will serve as a platform to further enhance the networking and to be part of the global efforts of addressing key scientific questions to contribute to polar sciences.