Gender approach in the National Antarctic Program of Argentina

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***Summary***

This document describes the general background and the activities that the Antarctic Program of Argentina is currently carrying out with regard to gender equality, and reaffirms the Argentine commitment to the implementation of measures that facilitate equal conditions and promote the full development of women in their Antarctic work.

***Background***

The National Directorate of the Antarctic (DNA) and the Argentine Antarctic Institute (IAA), both part of the organizational structure of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, International Trade and Worship, strongly support gender-specific actions in order to put on the spotlight the work and role of women in the field of Antarctic studies. This sustained effort has been complemented and reinforced since April 2021 with the creation, within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, of the Focal Point for Sexual and Gender Diversity (FOGENE), which purpose is to design policies and programs to advance the promotion and protection of the rights of LGBTIQ+ people, and the sexual diversity and gender identity of the workers of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. This instrument made it possible to incorporate a gender agenda within the management of Antarctic science.

Gender diversity is currently the object of public policies in Argentina. For example, on September 4, 2020, the Government established a quota for transvestites, transsexuals and transgender people in the Federal Government, meaning that they will have to constitute not less than 1% of the its workforce.

Within the structure of the DNA-IAA, women hold leadership positions as directors and managers with regards to the administration of resources in Antarctica and environmental management. As for scientific personnel, for years there has been gender parity among the personnel who carry out tasks in the different Argentine Antarctic stations. However, this situation was not yet reflected among the logistics support staff. Only in the summer bases Matienzo, on one occasion, and Brown on four occasions, the base leadership was in charge of women.

***Institutional Actions***

Within the framework of a special event dedicated to Antarctic researchers associated with the XXXIV SCAR Meeting (Malaysia, 2016), where more than 100 biographies of Antarctic women were launched on Wikipedia, a researcher and an environmental manager from Argentina were proposed on an international nomination mechanism to be part of this select group of biographies. The objective of this “Wikibomb” was to promote the profile of female Antarctic researchers so that they serve as an inspiration for future generations of professionals.

It is also noteworthy that on the 50th anniversary of the campaign in which four female Argentine scientists carried out fieldwork in Antarctica for the first time (1968), four new Antarctic toponyms were approved so as to pay tribute to these pioneers of Argentine Antarctic science. They were: Irene Bernasconi, outstanding specialist in echinoderms; María Adela Caría, bacteriologist; Elena Martínez Fontes, expert in marine invertebrates, and Carmen Pujals, renowned specialist in seaweeds. These four toponyms correspond to previously unnamed features in the extreme southeast of the Jason Peninsula, on the Weddell Sea.

With regard to personnel in Antarctica, thanks to an active gender policy, and in coordination with the institutions in charge of Antarctic logistics (Antarctic Joint Command), in recent years female staff have been commissioned to occupy positions traditionally in charge of men, such as mechanics or drivers. In this regard, it is noteworthy that in the last Summer Antarctic Campaign (CAV 2021/22) absolute gender parity was achieved in the logistics of Carlini station - managed by the National Directorate for Antarctica-. Moreover, for the first time in the history of the station the position of Deputy Head of station was held by a woman. It is expected that next season, and also for the first time, the position of Head of said base will be assigned to a woman.

Likewise, the 2021/2022 crew of the Carlini base received, before their transfer to the Antarctic continent, a lecture by experts on gender issues. This was the first time that they delivered this talk, the objective of which was to train personnel on gender issues and thus prevent inappropriate behaviour among personnel who will remain in Antarctica for a year. These talks will be repeated every year and it is expected that they will be extended to other groups that participate in the Antarctic campaigns.

It is within this framework that the Argentine Antarctic Institute carried out actions to promote gender equality in digital media as well as via institutional policies.

***Promotion actions***

Since 2020, the new social media accounts of the National Directorate for the Antarctic (@dna\_iaa) and the Argentine Antarctic Institute (@instituto\_antartico\_argentino) are not only used to promote science on the Antarctic continent, but also to strive for equal conditions in all areas within their organizational structure. These promotion actions contribute to making the work of women in science more visible and also acknowledging the gender parity verified in the latest Antarctic campaigns. In particular, a number of posts have been made on the DNA and IAA Twitter, Instagram and Facebook accounts to promote the work of the female professionals and technicians of the Argentine Antarctic Institute. These posts included interviews, stories and scientific data so as to give visibility to what women in the continent are doing. Moreover, as a way of celebrating the Day of Women and Girls in Science (February 11) and Women's Day (March 8), social media posts highlighted the outstanding role of female Antarctic workers, as a valuable example and inspiration that will surely help future generations of young Argentine women nurture their Antarctic vocations.

***Next steps***

Each year Argentina reaffirms its commitment to equal conditions and carry out policies so that more women can fully develop in their field of work. At the same time it promotes, in the framework of broader national and ministerial policies, an active participation of women in Antarctic science.

In that sense, the Argentine Antarctic institutions will continue to work in a coordinated manner to effectively promote and achieve gender objectives within the framework of the activities carried out by Argentina in the sixth continent.