Hosting of the 46th Antarctic Treaty Consultative Meeting (ATCM) at Kochi, India, 2024

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***Information paper submitted by India***

The present Information Paper submitted by India is as per the requirement of Para 119 of the Final Report of XLII -ATCM 2019 held in Prague, which states:

"(119)...The Meeting encouraged all upcoming ATCM Host Countries to submit a progress report to the ATCM in the form of an IP a year in advance and for upcoming Host Countries to provide regular progress reports to the Secretariat. It also agreed that this suggestion should be included in the Organisational Manual that the Secretariat routinely provided to upcoming Host Countries..."

India wishes to inform about preparations for the 46th ATCM to be held in Kochi, India, in 2024.

India thanks XLIV ATCM, which under Item 18 (a) para 342, stated "For future planning, the Meeting took note of the following likely timetable of upcoming ATCMs: • 2024 India …"

India takes pride in having the honour of hosting the ATCM after a gap of sixteen years and recalls with gratitude the excellent cooperation and support it received for hosting and conducting of XXX ATCM at Delhi in 2007 from several quarters, including the ATS, which came into existence at that time and the UK, the host country for XXIX ATCM. We are already in touch with ATS and the Host Country Secretariat of Finland and will benefit from their expertise and preparations for the current Meeting.

Considering the climatic conditions in Delhi during late May and June, the normal period of ATCM, India has decided to convene the Meeting at Kochi, a coastal city of Kerala, the southernmost state of India, which enjoys a moderate climate. Kerala, known as "God's own country", is one of India's top-rated tourist destinations and is the world's spice hotspot since ancient times. The Meeting is scheduled tentatively between 20th May and 30 May, 2024. The venue, Lulu Bolgatty International Convention Centre, is located on the picturesque Bolgatty Island. The venue is well-connected with all important national and state highways. It is a 45-minute drive from Cochin International Airport, the world's first-ever fully solar-powered airport. Once home to ancient civilisations and multiple kingdoms, Kochi has been a key ancient port city of the sub-continent and a key Centre of maritime trade and cultural exchange. It is a fascinating city of diverse cultures, traditions, architecture, art and cuisine. Steeped in history and uncommon beauty with palm-fringed islands and backwaters, Kochi is the perfect destination for an international convention such as the ATCM. Apart from having some of the most reputed wellness centres under the well-known ancient Indian medical science of Ayurveda, Kerala State also hosts rich tropical forests in the Western Ghats and many protected areas, including the Periyar Tiger Reserve.

Direct International flight connections to Kochi can be availed from Dubai, Doha or Singapore. It also has excellent connectivity with major airports in India.

Apart from the world-class facilities for an international convention, the venue has attached starred accommodation facility of the well-known Grand Hyatt Hotel for around 200 delegates at the venue itself. Additional accommodation facilities are available within close proximity of the venue. Along with this IP India proposes to screen a short film/video under Item 18 of the Agenda, highlighting more than four decades of sustained scientific activities of India in Antarctica and introducing the venue and its facilities. The video/film will subsequently be available on the website of ATS and the webpage of the 46th ATCM.

The National Centre for Polar and Ocean Research Centre (NCPOR), an autonomous institution under the Ministry of Earth Sciences (MoES) of the Government of India, which is the nodal agency to implement the entire activities of the Indian Polar Program, has been declared as the nodal agency for organising the 46th ATCM by the Government of India.

NCPOR has already constituted a National Advisory Committee and a Local Organising Committee with well-defined responsibilities. The experienced pool of scientists and logistics personnel available with the NCPOR will be used to host the Meeting successfully. The local organisational structure of the Meeting, as outlined in the ATS Organisational Manual, such as the ATCM Chair, ATCM Deputy Secretary/Head of Host Country Secretariat, and Head of Delegation, will be adopted by India.

The Government of India is committed to the cause of preserving the pristine Antarctic environment, as evidenced by its recent enactment of the 'Indian Antarctic Act 2022', in line with the Madrid Protocol. The funding and financial assistance are already committed, and additional resources will be forthcoming soon. Apart from the Ministry of Earth Sciences, the Ministry of External Affairs and the State Government of Kerala will be actively involved in the organisation of the 46th ATCM.

The year 2024 marks twenty years of active cooperation among Asian countries in furthering science and logistic cooperation in Polar Regions under the aegis of the Asian Forum for Polar Sciences (AFoPS). It is proposed to commemorate the event with AFoPS Chair addressing the delegates on achievements made under this Forum. We would undoubtedly be privileged to listen to the usual high-impact lectures from the experts from SCAR and others.

While all the Contracting Parties to the ATCM, Consultative and Non-consultative Parties will be attending the ATCM, the invitations will be sent by the ATS to the Observers from the Commission for the Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources (CCAMLR), the Scientific Committee on Antarctic Research (SCAR), and the Council of Managers of National Antarctic Programs (COMNAP) in accordance with Rules 2 and 31 of the ATCM Rules of Procedure.

Invitations to experts from international organisations and non-governmental organisations will also be sent for attending the Meeting, such as the International Hydrographic Organization (IHO), the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), the World Meteorological Organization (WMO), the Antarctic and Southern Ocean Coalition (ASOC), and the International Association of Antarctica Tour Operators (IAATO). Invitations will also be sent to all the usual NGOs and other participants such as in accordance with Rule 39 and Rule 42 of the Rules of Procedure, by ATS.

India is looking forward to the 46th ATCM in Kochi and would like to take this opportunity to invite you to the Meeting cordially.