Proposal for Inclusion of the San Telmo Wreck in the Antarctic Treaty List of Historic Sites and Monuments

**Proposal for Inclusion of the *San Telmo* Wreck in the Antarctic Treaty List of Historic Sites and Monuments**

**Working Paper submitted by Spain**

***Introduction***

This document proposes a new Historic Site and Monument in accordance with Article 8 of Annex V of the Protocol on Environmental Protection to the Antarctic Treaty. The proposed site corresponds to the remains of the *San Telmo* vessel that disappeared in the Drake Passage in September 1819. The exact location of the *San Telmo* wreck is unknown, but there have been some attempts to locate and explore its remains. The wreck includes all parts and accessories related to the vessel, armaments, equipment, supplies, as well as the ship itself and the crew and military staff transported within. The designation also includes all the personal objects that the crew would have left in the ship when it sank. Spain considers that the remains of the *San Telmo* ship should receive protection under Annex V of the Protocol.

**Background**

In 2019, Spain submitted ATCM XLII - WP18 *Notification of historical remains prior to 1958: The wreck of the Spanish vessel "San Telmo"* indicating their intention to present a proposal to officially incorporate the ship as a new Historic Site and Monument according to Resolution 2 (2018) on the *Guidelines for the assessment and management of Heritage in Antarctica*. The Committee agreed to grant the *San Telmo* wreck the provisional protection provided in Resolution 5 (2001), should its location be discovered.

In view of possible expeditions aimed at locating the remains of the wreck, Spain considers it appropriate to grant maximum protection to the remains of the *San Telmo* ship through its inclusion as a HSM.

**Proposal**

This document has been prepared in accordance with the Guidelines for the Assessment and Management of Antarctic Heritage, attached to Resolution 2 (2018) and Resolution 3 (2019) Visitor Site Guidelines Assessment and Review Checklist.

1. The location of the last sighting of the *San Telmo* vessel corresponds to 62ºS70ºW, a point where the winds and currents inevitably lead north of Livingston Island in the South Shetland Islands (Don Álvaro de Bazán General Archive of the Spanish Navy).
2. The earliest records of the wreck are found in contemporary British documentation at the time of the loss; Captain Smith is recorded to have made two landings at Shirreff Cove and to have found the remains of a wreck that still preserved inscriptions from the sunken ship, the *San Telmo*.
3. On 4 September 1819, the *San Telmo* found itself alone and adrift in the middle of a terrible storm. The ship disappeared with a crew of 644 men: sailors, soldiers and marines. It is a State Ship and a Collective Military Tomb.
4. The history of human presence in Antarctica is very short and the remains of the *San Telmo* ship, if found, could be considered the first human remains in Antarctica. The ship and its artefacts are archaeologically significant in themselves, having been submerged for more than 100 years, which is a widely accepted international threshold for constituting underwater heritage. The wreck includes all parts and accessories related to the vessel, armaments, equipment, supplies, as well as the ship itself and the crew and military staff transported within. The designation also includes all the personal objects that the crew would have left in the ship when it sank.
5. The attached checklist provides details according to the *Guide to the presentation of Working Papers containing proposals for Antarctic Specially Protected Areas, Antarctic Specially Managed Areas or Historic Sites and Monuments*, attached to Resolution 3 (2018).

**Recommendation**

Spain recommends that the CEP approves the addition of the wreck of Spanish vessel *San Telmo* to the list as a new Historic Site and Monument.

**Cover note**

The following information is provided in accordance with the "*Guide to the presentation of Working Papers containing proposals for Antarctic Specially Protected Areas, Antarctic Specially Managed Areas or Historic Sites and Monuments*," attached to Resolution 3 (2018):

Has this site or monument been designated by a previous ATCM as a Historic Site or Monument? ~~Yes~~/**No** (If yes, please list the relevant Recommendations and Measures).

**Introduction**

* **Name of the proposed HSM:** Wreck of the Spanish vessel "*San Telmo*," disappeared in 1819
* **Original proposing Party:** Spain
* **Party undertaking the management:** Spain
* **Type:** Shipwreck

**Description and documentation of the site**

* **Site location**: The exact location of the wreck is unknown, documentary evidence of the *San Telmo* wreck locates the wreck around Cape Shirreff (Livingston Island, South Shetland Islands). The time that elapsed between those events and the appearance of commercial navigators in those waters, especially sealers, meant that the remains of the wreck were continuously reused and over time disappeared, either consumed or transformed.
* **Description**: We propose to designate the wreck, including all the parts and accessories associated with the ship, armaments, equipment, supplies, the ship itself and the crew and military personnel transported within, as well as any personal objects that the crew may have left on the ship at the time of its sinking.

The *San Telmo*, a third-class (74-gun) liner, was built in the Esteiro shipyard in Ferrol, Spain, in 1788. The vessel had two decks and 74 guns, it was 190 feet in length, with a 52-foot beam and a draught measuring 25 feet. Its approximate displacement was 2,750 tons and it had a crew of 644 men: sailors, soldiers and marines.

**Historical/Cultural features**

* **Designation criteria**: The *San Telmo* wreck meets the following criteria set out in Resolution 3 (2009): a) an event of special significance in the history of Antarctic exploration; c) it has a particular association with a notable feat of endurance or achievement. The wreck will also be of interest to marine archaeologists and others who promote the heritage of Antarctica and, therefore: e) the particular technical, historical, cultural or architectural value in its materials, design or method of construction; and f) it offers the potential through study, and it provides educational value, to reveal information about significant human activities in Antarctica.
* **Historical description**: The first evidence is provided by contemporary British documentation from the time of the loss, followed by other evidence from commercial seafarers from the same time period, though with lower documentary value. The documents state that Captain Smith made two landings in Shirreff Cove and found remains of a shipwreck that included inscriptions from the sunken ship (the *San Telmo*). He also found part of an anchor stock that he took with him to England with a view to using it later for his own coffin. In 1845, a British pilot chart reported the same news, this time in an official specialised manual published by the British Admiralty’s Hydrographic Office which contained the following paragraph: “The remains of the shipwreck were found by sealers in 1820, with no survivors, on Livingston Island in the South Shetlands”. For his part, James Weddell, who was in those locations between 1822 and 1824, recounts that a great number of seal bones were found dispersed on a beach on said island and linked that with the prior incident. He deduced that they were animals that were used for food by some of the castaways who survived the sinking, prior to their deaths due to the harshness of the Antarctic climate. According to Spanish investigators who carried out an archaeological investigation project in the 1990s, the evidence found at the site and the toponymy left by the British -Telmo Island, Half Moon Bay, Shirreff Cove- fully corresponds with the old documents. The time that elapsed between those events and the appearance of commercial navigators in those waters, especially sealers, meant that the remains of the wreck were continuously reused and over time disappeared, either consumed or transformed. The wood was used for campfires, and parts of the sailcloth, metals, etc., were used as utensils and to make small shelters. Some of the shelters, including those of the shipwreck survivors, were reliably identified by Spanish archaeologists between 1992 and 1995.

**Management**

**Management Plan**: Taking into account that the location and conservation conditions are unknown, we propose not to develop a Management Plan. The site should be kept intact, with no elements being removed from it until the location has been established and a Management Plan is implemented.

Once located, the wreck site should be managed in accordance with established international principles for the management of underwater cultural heritage (UNESCO Convention 2001) and international best practices for site management and the study and access to it, considering that the *San Telmo* vessel was a “warship or a State ship” which gives it sovereign immunity, a condition that is not lost as a result of the sinking.

**Education and outreach**.

The history of the *San Telmo* vessel is known within Spain, however there is a lack of awareness at the international level and it should be enhanced. In 2019, an exhibition was held at the San Fernando Naval Museum (Cádiz) to commemorate the second centennial of its sinking, with several related activities carried out throughout the year. The intention of Spain is to promote expeditions for archaeological study of the probable area of the sinking in order to confirm the fact.

In the event that the wreck itself is discovered, a greater variety of education and outreach activities will be planned to reach more citizens with special attention to the international community.

**Reasons for designation**

In conclusion, and with reference to Resolution 8 (1995) and the Annex to Resolution 3 (2009), this site deserves to be included in the list of Historic Sites and Monuments since:

1. The *San Telmo* vessel could have been the first ship to reach Antarctica.
2. The proposed HSM has the potential to reveal historical information related to the possible first landing in Antarctica and survival in precarious conditions as a result of a shipwreck;
3. The ship and its artefacts are archaeologically significant in themselves, having been submerged for more than 100 years, which is a widely accepted international threshold for constituting underwater heritage; and
4. The increased likelihood of an expedition to locate and dive the wreck means it is important to protect it and ensure that it is not damaged, or that its artefacts are not removed without proper authorisation and planning.