Antarctica in a Changing Climate

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***Working paper submitted by the United Kingdom, Australia, Belgium, Finland, France, Germany, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Spain, Sweden and the United States***

As the ATCM was sadly cancelled in 2020, in light of the global Covid-19 pandemic, ATCMXLIII in 2021 is the first meeting of the Parties since the publication of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) Special Report on the Ocean and Cryosphere in a Changing Climate (SROCC). The SROCC, which has been approved and accepted by the IPCC plenary, assimilates the evidence that climate change is having a profound impact on Antarctica, and that these impacts have consequential global effects.

Some of the SROCC key findings in relation to Antarctica include the acceleration of ice flow and retreat in the Amundsen Sea Embayment of West Antarctica and in Wilkes Land, East Antarctica, which has the potential to lead to global mean sea-level rise of several metres within a few centuries. The report also highlights future changes to ocean circulation because of the significant amounts of human-produced heat and dissolved carbon in the Southern Ocean. It also projects changes in the distribution of krill, which will have consequential implications for the wider Antarctic ecosystem, including shifts in abundance and distribution of Antarctic mammals, birds and fish.

Whilst the mitigation of global climate change from ongoing global warming is for another body, the ATCM is seized of the implications of climate change on the protection and management of Antarctica, and has a role to play in researching and communicating Antarctic climate change science to the international audience.

Given the stark findings of the SROCC report on the future likely implications for Antarctica, including as a result of warming trends already in the global system, **the UK, Belgium, Australia, Finland, France, Germany, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Spain, Sweden and the United States recommend that the ATCM adopt an updated Resolution on climate change.** A draft is attached.

Draft Resolution

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The Representatives,

*Conscious* of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) Special Report on the Ocean and Cryosphere in a Changing Climate (SROCC), which has been approved and accepted by the IPCC plenary, and its Summary for Policy Makers,

*Concerned* at the implications to Antarctica from a warming global climate, identified in the SROCC, including increasing melting of the West Antarctic ice sheet, and changes to Antarctic and Southern Ocean ecosystems,

*Further concerned* about the global implications of Antarctic change, notably sea-level rise and ocean circulation,

*Recalling* Resolution 6 (2015) and remaining committed to communicating Antarctic climate change research internationally,

*Welcoming* the regular updates by the Scientific Committee on Antarctic Research (SCAR) of its Antarctic Climate Change and the Environment report and looking forward to receiving further advice in due course emanating from SCAR’s three new climate change focused Scientific Research Programmes: INSTANT, AntClimnow and Ant-ICON,

*Recalling also* Resolution 4 (2015) and welcoming the ongoing implementation of the Committee for Environmental Protection’s (CEP) Climate Change Response Work Programme, and the annual updates provided by the CEP to the ATCM,

*Recognising* the importance of the implementation of the Paris Agreement to avoid the worst-case scenario implications for Antarctica projected by the IPCC,

*Determined* to seek ways to address the effects of climate and environmental change on the Antarctic environment and dependent and associated ecosystems,

Recommend that their Governments:

1. Ensure their delegations to the next UNFCCC Conference of the Parties, planned for Glasgow in November 2021, are aware of the implications for Antarctica, unless action is taken to avoid dangerous climate change. In particular, the projections of its contribution to global sea-level rise, and the implications for upholding the commitment in the Protocol on Environmental Protection to the Antarctic Treaty to the comprehensive protection of the Antarctic environment and dependent and associated ecosystems;
2. Incorporate climate change considerations into the management of all human activities in Antarctica to seek to avoid or mitigate any additional stresses to the Antarctic terrestrial and marine environment, including its biodiversity and ecosystems, in order to increase resilience to climate change effects;
3. Support their national Antarctic programmes and SCAR in their ongoing efforts to undertake research about climate change and its impacts, and to communicate the implications for Antarctica, both within the Antarctic Treaty System and internationally.