Report of the intersessional contact group to review the Scientific Information in the Electronic Information Exchange System

Report of the intersessional contact group established to review the Scientific Information in the Electronic Information Exchange System

Summary

ATCM XLIV agreed to establish an Intersessional Contact Group (ICG) on Scientific Information in the Electronic Information Exchange System (EIES) to discuss how Parties could improve the scientific information exchanged within the EIES. This document reports on the ICG work developed during the intersessional period and proposes the adoption by the ATCM of a Decision to update the consolidated list of information exchange requirements, annexed Decision 5 (2022).

Background

After considering WP 9 *Review of the scientific information contained in the EIES,* presented by Spain, ATCM XLIV agreed to establish an ICG on Scientific Information in the EIES to discuss how Parties could improve the scientific information exchanged within this system (paragraph 168 final report). The ICG was tasked with the following terms of reference:

1. Discussing the advisability of reporting on the existence of international scientific cooperation among the Parties;
2. Examining the fields contained in item 2.1.2. (Science Activities in Previous Year) of the Annex to Decision 7 (2021) to determine whether it is necessary to include other customisable fields that would allow to generate summarised reports and thematic maps;
3. Analysing the advisability of including a section in item 1 (Pre-season Information) of said Annex on science projects foreseen to be developed in the following year’s campaign;
4. Avoiding duplicating information already submitted to prevent overload in fulfilling the exchange requirements;
5. Reporting on the results and proposals of the ICG at the ATCM XLV in order to update Decision 7 (2021); and
6. Identifying any specific trends in EIES reporting by Parties with the view of increasing utilisation of the EIES.

It was decided that Observers and Experts of the ATCM were invited to provide input, and that Spain would act as convener and report to ATCM XLV.

The work of the ICG

ICG’s work was developed in four rounds. Comments were received from 7 Parties (Argentina, Australia, Ecuador, France, Poland, Norway, and the United States).

Participants were invited to discuss the possibility of incorporating some changes to the consolidated list of information exchange requirements, annexed to Decision 5 (2022). The goal of these proposed changes was to report specifically on science activities with international cooperation, to foster science collaborations, and to facilitate processing the information exchanged, allowing the generation of summarised reports or thematic maps. Such proposed changes specifically referred to the addition of two new articles in the Pre-season and Permanent information sections of the EIES, respectively and the modification of an article in the Annual report section.

In addition, the ICG also discussed likely ways to avoid duplication of scientific information.

Proposals, comments received and ICG outputs

1. It was proposed to add a new article 3.5. International Cooperation, in Section 3. Permanent Information. While general consensus was reached on the spirit of the addition, two different options for the first part of such an article were discussed:

Option A: Existing formal Antarctic (or polar) cooperation agreements with other Parties. Option B: Existing formal Antarctic (or polar) cooperation agreements supporting scientific collaboration with other Parties.

Option A broadly refers to any kind of cooperation agreements, while Option B limits the scope only to those cooperation agreements that support scientific collaborations. The ATCM should decide which one is preferred.

As some Parties suggested these notifications should not be mandatory, the ATCM should also decide which part(s) of this new article should be considered “optional”.

1. It was proposed to make a couple of additions in point 2.1.2 *Science Activities in Previous Year* (Annual Report) to allow Parties to: a) describe research projects through searchable and processable information (using up to 5 keywords); and b) include information on international cooperation.

Most participants supported this proposal for additions to the current information on research projects but preferred to leave this requirement as “optional”, given the already large amount of information reported through the EIES.

1. It was proposed to add a new article *1.3. Scientific Information* within Pre-season information, redacted as: “List of research projects planned for next season (giving project name or number, location(s), principal investigator details, and international cooperation, if any, providing country and institution involved in each case)”.

Some participants expressed that providing detailed pre-season information on specific projects may be of limited use, as engagement and collaboration at a project level would rely on a longer planning timeframes, and advance planning.

Consequently, it was suggested not to proceed with this proposal.

1. To avoid duplication of scientific information, the proposal to the ICG consisted of discussing whether the information provided in the “Key Scientific Priorities” section of the ATS website could adequately fulfil what was requested in point 2.1.1 “Forward Plans” of the EIES.

The general view was that the information provided in the “Key Scientific Priorities” section of the ATS website adequately covers the forward plans for scientific research.

Therefore, there was consensus in retaining point 2.1.1 “Forward Plans”, but to avoid likely duplications, participants proposed to leave the possibility to respond to this requirement with a link to the “Key Scientific Priorities” section of the ATS website.

1. Finally, in response to TOR 6 “Trends in EIES reporting by Parties with the view of increasing utilisation of the EIES” some comments revealed difficulties to provide the scientific information in the EIES and the convenience to reduce the workload of entering the information. Participants suggested that having an excel file as a template to complete the fields of information on scientific projects would facilitate the uploading process by Parties. The ATS could assess the viability of this option.

Proposal to the ATCM

After the work done by this ICG, it is proposed to the ATCM to revise the consolidated list of information exchange requirements, annexed to Decision 5 (2022) in order to improve the scientific information exchanged within the EIES.

In summary, changes would include:

1. Adding a new article on International Cooperation in the Permanent section of the EIES (3.5 International Cooperation).
2. Including two new items to the Annual report in section 2.1.2. Science Activities in Previous Year.
3. In section 2.1.1. Forward Plans, offering the possibility to add a link to the corresponding “Key Science Priorities” section of the ATS website.

The ICG also recommends the ATS assess the viability of preparing an excel file as a template to complete the fields of information included in point 2.1.2 *Science Activities in Previous Year* of the Annual Report to facilitate the uploading process by Parties.

Annex 1 to this Working Paper contains a draft of a proposed update to the consolidated list of information exchange requirements (with proposed changes in red), and Annex 2, a draft Decision to adopt such a list.

Annex 1

**Information exchange requirements**

1. **Pre-season Information**

*The following information should be submitted as early as possible, preferably by 1 October, and in any event no later than the start of the activities being reported.*

* 1. Operational information
     1. National Expeditions

1. Stations

Names of stations (giving region, latitude and longitude), seasonality, operating period (for seasonal), status, maximum population, and medical support available.

Names of refuges (giving region, latitude and longitude), medical facilities, and accommodation capacity. Other major field activities, *eg*, scientific traverse (giving locations).

1. Non-Military Ships

Name of non-military ships, ice strength, country of registry, number of voyages, planned departure dates, areas of operation, ports of departure and arrival to and from Antarctica, and purpose of voyage. Maximum crew, maximum passengers.

1. Non-Military Aircraft

Type of non-military aircraft, planned number of flights, period of flights or planned departure dates for inter-continental flights, purpose. Maximum crew, maximum passengers.

1. Research Rockets

Coordinates of the place of launching, time and date/period, direction of launching, planned maximum altitude, impact area, type and specifications of rockets, purpose and title of research project.

1. Military

* Number of military personnel (officers and enlisted) in expeditions.
* Number and types of armaments.
* Information on military equipment, if any, not included in Section 3.2.D below, including its site name, coordinates (latitude and longitude), type of equipment, and purpose of equipment.
* Ship: Name of military ship, ice strength, number of voyages, planned departure dates, areas of operation, ports of departure and arrival to and from Antarctica, and purpose of voyage. Maximum crew, maximum passengers.
* Aircraft: Type of military aircraft, planned number of flights, period of flights or planned departure dates for inter-continental flights, and purpose. Maximum crew, maximum passengers.
  + 1. Non-governmental Expeditionsi

1. Vessel-based Operations

Name of operator, name of vessel, maximum crew, maximum passengers, country of registry of vessel, number of voyages, expedition leader, planned departure dates, ports of departure and arrival to and from Antarctica, areas of operation including the names of proposed visited sites and the planned dates at which these visits will take place, type of activity, whether these visits include landing, (optionally) duration of landing and the number of visitors that participate in each of the specific activities.

1. Land-based Operations

Name of expedition, name of the operator, method of transportation to, from and within Antarctica, type of adventure/activity, location/s of activities and/or routes, dates of expedition, number of personnel involved, contact address, web-site address.

1. Aircraft Activities

Name of operator, type of aircraft, number of flights, period of flights, departure date per flight, departure and arrival location per flight, route per flight, purpose per flight, and number of passengers.

1. Denial of Authorizations

Name of vessel and/or expedition, name of operator, date, reason for denial.

* 1. Visits to Protected Areas

Name and number of protected area, number of people permitted to visit, date/period and purpose.

1. **Annual Report**

*The following information should be submitted as early as possible after the end of the austral summer season, but in all cases before 1 October, with a reporting period of 1 April to 30 March.*

* 1. Scientific Information
     1. Forward Plansii

Details of strategic or multi-year science plans, or a link to the corresponding Key Science Priorities section of the ATS web site, or contact point for printed version. List of planned participations in major, international, collaborative science programmes/projects.

* + 1. Science Activities in Previous Year

List of research projects undertaken in previous year under science discipline (giving location(s), principal investigator, contact details of the responsible institution, project name or number, discipline, up to 5 keywords defining the project [optional], international cooperation, if any, providing country and institution involved in each case [optional] and main activity/remarks).

* 1. Operational information
     1. National expeditions

Update of information given under 1.1.1.

* + 1. Non-governmental expeditions

Update of information given under 1.1.2 plus, for section 1.1.2.A and B: total amount of passengers transported in each journey, total number of crew members on board in each journey and combined activity for section A, B and C. Information on unusual incidents for sections A, B and C, including type of unusual incident occurred (affected people, environment and/or materials/assets), date, place, from whom assistance was received and contact point for more information on the incident (operator or a member of the National Programme or whoever the competent authority considered).

* 1. Permit Information

2.3.1. Visits to Protected Areas

Update of information provided under 1.2.

2.3.2. Taking and harmful interference with flora and fauna

Permit number, permit period, species, location, amount, sex, age and purposeiii.

2.3.3. Introduction of non-native species

Permit number, permit period, species, location, amount, purposeiv, removal or disposal.

2.4. Environmental Information

2.4.1. Compliance with the Protocolv

Description of measure, date of effect.

2.4.2. Contingency Plans

Title of Contingency Plan(s) for oil spills and other environmental emergencies, copies (PDFs) or contact point for printed versions.

2.4.3. List of IEEs and CEEsvi

List of IEEs/CEEs undertaken during year giving proposed activity, (optionally) period/length, location, level of assessment and decision taken.

2.4.4. Monitoring activities reportvii

Name of activity, location, procedures put in place, significant information obtained, action taken in consequence thereof.

2.4.5. Waste Management Plans

Title, name of site/vessel, copy (PDF) or contact point for printed version. Report on implementation of waste management plans during the year.

2.4.6. Measures taken to implement the provisions of Annex Vviii

Description of measures.

2.4.7. Procedures relating to EIAs

Description of appropriate National Procedures.

2.4.8. Prevention of marine pollutionix

Description of measures.

1. **Permanent Information**

*The following information can be updated at any time.*

* 1. Science Facilities
     1. Automatic Recording Stations/Observatories

Site name, coordinates (latitude and longitude), elevation (m), parameters recorded, observation frequency, reference number *(eg,* WMO no.).

* 1. Operational Information

1. Stations

Name of stations (giving region, latitude and longitude), status, seasonality, date established, accommodation and medical facilities.

Names of refuges (giving region, latitude and longitude), medical facilities, and accommodation capacity.

B. Non-Military Ships

Name of non-military ships, country of registry, ice strength, maximum crew, maximum passengers.

C. Non-Military Aircraft

Type of non-military aircraft, maximum crew, maximum passengers.

D. Military

- Number of military personnel (officers and enlisted)

- Number and types of armaments.

- Information on military equipment, if any, not already reported in the EIES, including its site name, coordinate (latitude and longitude), type of equipment, and purpose.

- Ship: Name of military ship, ice strength, maximum crew, maximum passengers.

- Aircraft: Type of military aircraft, maximum crew, maximum passengers.

3.3 Environmental Information

3.3.1 Waste Management Plans

Title of Plan, site/vessel, copy (PDF) or contact point for printed version.

3.3.2 Contingency Plans

Title of Contingency Plan(s) for Oil Spills and other environmental emergencies, copies (PDFs) or contact point for printed versions.

3.3.3 Inventory of Past Activities

Name of station/base/field camp/traverse/crashed aircraft/etc., coordinates (latitude and longitude), period during which activity undertaken, description/purpose of activities undertaken, description of equipment or facilities remaining.

3.3.4 Compliance with the Protocolx

Description of measure, date of effect.

3.3.5 Procedures relating to EIAs

Same as 2.4.7.

3.3.6 Prevention of marine pollution

Same as 2.4.8.

3.3.7 Measures taken to implement the provisions of Annex V

Same as 2.4.6.

3.4 Other Information

3.4.1 Relevant National Legislation

Description of law, regulation, administrative action or other measure, date of effect/enacted, giving copy (PDF) or contact point for printed version.

* 1. Cooperation Agreements

OPTION A: Existing formal Antarctic (or polar) cooperation agreements with other Parties. If any, indicate for each case: a) title of the agreement; b) subject matter of the agreement (general, science, logistics, environmental management, other); c) description [optional]; d) year of signing [optional]; e) duration of the agreement [optional]; f) copy (PDF) or link to the document [optional].

OPTION B: Existing formal Antarctic (or polar) cooperation agreements supporting scientific collaboration with other Parties. If any, indicate for each case: a) title of the agreement; b) subject matter of the agreement (general, science, logistics, environmental management, other); c) description [optional]; d) year of signing [optional]; e) duration of the agreement [optional]; f) copy (PDF) or link to the document [optional].

i provision of information on Non-governmental expeditions will be allowed for it to be provided as soon as possible after completion of national processes, with the relevant timing description being: ‘as soon as possible following completion of national processes, preferably by the pre-season target date of 1 October, and no later than the start of the activity’.

ii optional provision of information on Forward plans will be allowed at any time, for example when domestic plans are completed or updated.

iii purpose with reference to Article 3 of Annex II to the Protocol.

iv purpose with reference to Article 4 of Annex II to the Protocol.

v new measures adopted during past year in accordance with Article 13 of the Protocol on Environmental Protection to the Antarctic Treaty including the adoption of laws and regulations, administrative actions and enforcement measures.

vi information on IEEs and CEEs is encouraged to be provided ‘as soon as domestic processes are concluded, while maintaining the existing deadline for Parties to submit the information’.

vii Monitoring activities connected with activities subject to initial and comprehensive environmental evaluations (referred to in Protocol Annex I, Art. 6.1 c)

viii Information on measures taken to implement Annex V including site inspections and any steps taken to address instances of activities in contravention of the provisions of ASPA or ASMA management plans

ix Measures to ensure that any warship, naval auxiliary or other ship owned or operated by a State and used, for the time being, only on government non-commercial service acts in a manner consistent, so far as is reasonable and practicable, with the Annex.

x Measures adopted in accordance with Article 13 of the Protocol on Environmental Protection to the Antarctic Treaty including the adoption of laws and regulations, administrative actions and enforcement measures

Annex 2

**Decision X (2023)**

**Updating requirements of Information Exchange on Scientific Information**

**The Representatives**,

Noting Articles III (1)(a) and VII (5) of the Antarctic Treaty;

Conscious of the obligations within the Protocol on Environmental Protection to the Antarctic Treaty (“the Protocol”) and its Annexes to exchange information;

Conscious also of decisions of the Antarctic Treaty Consultative Meeting (“ATCM”) in relation to the information to be exchanged by Parties;

Desiring that the exchange of information by Parties be conducted in the most efficient and timely manner;

Desiring also that the information to be exchanged by Parties could be readily identified to maximise its utility;

Recalling Decision 4 (2012), which decided that the Parties will use the Electronic Information Exchange System (“EIES”) to exchange information in accordance with the Antarctic Treaty and the Protocol and its Annexes and which specified that Parties will continue to work with the Secretariat of the Antarctic Treaty (“the Secretariat”) to refine and improve the EIES;

Noting that Decision 4 (2012) requires Parties to update relevant sections of the EIES regularly throughout the year, in order that such information be made available and accessible to Parties as soon as practicable;

Desiring to make changes to the consolidated list attached to this Decision, on sections 2.1.1. *Forward Plans* and 2.1.2. *Science Activities in Previous Year* (Annual report), and to add a new article on Cooperation Agreements to section 3. Permanent information.

**Decide:**

1. the Annex to this Decision represents a consolidated list of the information agreed to be exchanged by Parties
2. the Secretariat shall modify the EIES to reflect the information contained in the Annex to this Decision; and
3. the Annex to Decision 5 (2022) is no longer current.