Urgent measures to be taken with respect to certain tourist and non-governmental activities

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Summary

In order to address the urgency highlighted by previous formal and informal ATCM discussions regarding Antarctic tourism, in particular issues related to increasing visitor numbers and diversification of activities, France and the Netherlands propose the adoption of a Resolution calling on Governments to prevent the development of certain tourism and non-governmental activities that are found to be inconsistent with rules and principles of the Antarctic Treaty System, pending the completion of the discussions on a comprehensive instrument dedicated to tourism.

Introduction

France and the Netherlands co-chaired an informal workshop on a strategic vision and policy program for Antarctic tourism, hosted by France in Paris (8 to 10 March 2023). In this framework, participants from 17 Consultative Parties, 2 Non-Consultative Parties, 4 Experts and Observer organisations discussed Antarctic tourism issues. Based on previous ATCM formal and informal discussions, the debates highlighted that he ATCM should take action to address Antarctic tourism related concerns, such as growth, diversification, monitoring, compliance and governance. The workshop also emphasized the need to act quickly to address certain urgent issues, such as those related to specific tourism activities. These urgent measures are the subject of this WP.

This WP acknowledges that the main outcome of the workshop is the proposal to discuss at ATCM 45 the draft-Decision to start a dedicated process on the development of a comprehensive and consistent framework for tourism and other non-governmental activities in Antarctica (see Working Paper 13 “*Dedicated process for the development of a comprehensive and consistent framework for Antarctic tourism and other non-governmental activities*” submitted to ATCM XLV, hereafter referred to as the “WP013”). However, the above-mentioned urgency on identified specific issues also justifies a discussion on the adoption of immediate measures. Acknowledging that developing a comprehensive and consistent framework will take time, immediate action is necessary to prevent the continued increase and diversification of tourism activities from leading to a situation of hard-to-reverse non-compliance with the ATS rules and principles. The proponents would like to emphasize the complementary nature of the approaches presented in the above-mentioned WP013and the present WP. The latter does not call into question the need expressed by WP013 to break with a piecemeal approach with regards to tourism management. It falls within a different time frame, and simply aims to address urgent issues that cannot wait for the process proposed by the WP013 to be completed.

‘No regret’ measures

Based on the discussions in the Paris Workshop, the proponents of this WP propose to the ATCM to discourage the following activities from being carried out in the Antarctic:

* overnight camping in the top-20 most visited sites;
* any off-ship activities in Antarctica from vessels carrying more than 500 passengers (additionally to the landing prohibition of Measure 15 (2009)), to ensure these activities are real ‘cruise only’ activities;
* helicopter or any other motorized land vehicle use for tourism and other non-governmental activities, except in case of emergencies and for the purpose of enhancing human safety;
* site visits that are not covered by ATCM or IAATO site-specific guidelines and/or ATCM management plans and/or visits to sites that have never been visited by tourists or other non-governmental activities.

The proponents of this WP consider that these activities may contravene Article 3 of the Protocol on Environmental Protection to the Antarctic Treaty. Overnight stays, off-ship activities conducted by large numbers of passengers during a long period of the day, recreational use of motorized vehicles, visits to unexplored sites, or access to new wildlife colonies on which little or no scientific data are available, are found to be inconsistent with the respect of the intrinsic value of Antarctica, including its wilderness and aesthetic values and its value as an area for the conduct of scientific research. In addition, these activities may pose safety issues that could pose serious threats on the ability of operators to respond efficiently and timely to incidents.

Proponents of this WP suggest that the implementation of these activities be discouraged through a specific Resolution. It will have the following benefits:

* It will provide the Parties with an ATCM instrument to use to prevent the development of activities that are not in line with the principles, values and rules of the ATS, especially article 3 of the EP, taking into account the fact that it is easier to act before these activities develop too widely, while it is more difficult to go back and stop activities that have already been deployed at a large scale;
* It will contribute to meet the General Principles of Antarctic Tourism adopted by Resolution 7 (2009);
* It will allow for the harmonization of practices of all Parties, avoid inconsistency in this regard, and thus provide a level playing field for operators.

Proposals to the 45th ATCM in Helsinki

France and the Netherlands, propose to the 45th ATCM in Helsinki:

* to discuss and adopt the proposed Resolution annexed to the present WP

Resolution XX (2023)

[title]

The Representatives,  
  
Concerned about the continuing and substantial increase in the numbers and diversity of tourism and other non-governmental activities in Antarctica;

Acknowledging that the concerns associated with the growth, diversification, monitoring, compliance and governance in relation to Antarctic tourism and other non-governmental activities in Antarctica require the ATCM to take urgent responsibility for international governance action;

Recalling Resolutions 2 (2022), which adopted and updated lists of sites subject to Site Guidelines for Visitors (“Site Guidelines”);

Recalling Measure 15 (2009) and the “General Principles of Antarctic Tourism” adopted by Resolution 7 (2009);

Recommend that their Governments:

* Require their operators organizing or conducting tourist or other non-governmental activities in the Antarctic Treaty area, for which advance notification is required in accordance with Article VII(5) of the Antarctic Treaty:

1. to refrain from conducting overnight camping activities in Top Twenty Most-Visited Sites between the 2016-17 and 2021-22 seasons, as listed in Appendix 1 to the present Resolution;
2. to refrain from conducting any off-ship activities in Antarctica from vessels carrying more than 500 passengers;
3. to refrain from using helicopter or any other motorized land vehicle for tourism and other non-governmental activities, except in case of emergencies and for the purpose of enhancing human safety;
4. to refrain from landing in sites that are not covered by ATCM or IAATO site-specific guidelines and/or ATCM management plans and/or visits to sites that have never been visited by tourists or other non-governmental activities.

Appendix 1

Top Twenty Most-Visited Sites between the 2016-17 and 2021-22 seasons (including yacht visits), 2020-21 season excluded (Ref. IP 43, ATCM XLIV, IAATO)

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| Goudier Island |
| Neko Harbor |
| Cuverville Island |
| Whalers Bay |
| Half Moon Island - Chinstrap Colony |
| Brown Station |
| Danco Island |
| Jougla Point |
| Petermann Island |
| Brown Bluff |
| Mikkelsen Harbor (D'Hainaut) |
| Damoy Point/Dorian Bay |
| Aitcho Islands - Barrientos Island |
| Portal Point |
| Vernadsky Station |
| Orne Harbor |
| Yankee Harbor |
| Pleneau Island |
| Telefon Bay |
| Port Charcot |