Report of the CEP Subsidiary Group on Climate Change Response (SGCCR) 2022-2023

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Working Paper submitted by Germany as Convenor of the SGCCR

Summary

During the 2022-2023 intersessional period, the focus in the Subsidiary Group on Climate Change Response (SGCCR) was laid on prioritization of activities already described in the Climate Change Response Work Programme (CCRWP). According to feedback from eleven actively contributing SGCCR members, the six topics came into focus; these were, among others, work to assess the status of climate-vulnerable Antarctic species, intensified coordination on climate change response in the marine realm with SC-CAMLR, as well as the ever more urgent de-contamination of past sites of activities.

The SGCCR invites all CEP members to more actively support CCRWP implementation, including the proposed six areas of activity.

***Background***

The CCRWP was adopted through Resolution 4 (2015) and updated by CEP in 2016. To support updating, implementation and follow-up of the CCRWP, a new SGCCR was established at ATCM XL (Decision 1 (2017)). At CEP XXIII, following a review of the SGCCR, the Committee agreed that the work of the SGCCR should continue in the future under its current Terms of Reference (CEP XXIII Final Report para. 35). The SGCCR maintains flexibility regarding membership and encourages new members.

The Terms of Reference for the SGCCR are to facilitate the efficient and timely implementation of the CCRWP. In addition to the agreed Terms of Reference, CEP XX tasked the SGCCR to develop operating mechanisms to support good participation and efficient handling of work (CEP XX Final Report, para. 74). Regarding the CEP Five-Year Work Plan, ‘Climate Change Implications for the Environment’ is set as a Priority 1 issue, with the key action ‘Implementing the CCRWP’.

Prior to CEP XXIV (2022) the SGCCR drafted an update of the CCRWP based on emerging issues and surveyed developments of climate change effects over last years, which was presented in WP 37 (ATCM XLIV/CEP XXIV). No consensus was reached on updates to the CCRWP and the SGCCR therefore has continued working to implement the existing CCRWP (2016) in accordance with the current Terms of Reference.

***SGCCR operation during the 2022-23 intersessional period***

During the 2022-2023 intersessional period, the focus was laid on prioritization of activities already described in the CCRWP. Actively contributing were eleven representatives from eight CEP Member countries (Australia, France, Germany, Norway, Portugal, Spain, the United Kingdom and the United States) and three Observer Organizations (ASOC, COMNAP and IAATO). The SGCCR was convened by one of the CEP Vice-Chairs, Dr. Heike Herata.

Based on the given impulses of the involved representatives, the SGCCR derived six activities out of the CCRWP, which should be advanced by CEP members and Observer organizations in the following intersessional period:

1. Supporting work to assess the status of climate-vulnerable Antarctic species (Action 6c),
2. Developing guidance on climate change considerations in documents for establishing and managing protected areas (Action 2e),
3. Keeping the Non-Native Species (NNS) manual updated with current developments (Action 1a),
4. Intensifying coordination on climate change response in the marine realm with SC-CAMLR (Action 3e),
5. De-contamination of past sites of activities in the Antarctic area (Action 5f),
6. Assessing the risk of climate change for Antarctic existing and projected infrastructure and associated environmental consequences and considering the impacts of climate change linked with the EIA guidelines, e.g. ensuring proposed long-term facilities are suitably resilient to climate change (Action 5a and 5d).

Besides the above activities, all Parties’ activities supporting other CCRWP actions are no less important and are equally valued.

The activity no. (1), requesting a “Programme of status assessments for endangered or threatened Antarctic species in the light of Climate Change, including species not yet listed in the IUCN Red List as vulnerable”, was prioritized by several CEP members. As this challenge will not be a task for the SGCCR to fulfill on its own, the SGCCR likes to call on all CEP members to promote necessary research linked to status assessment of climate-vulnerable species and ask the SCAR colleagues for support, as far as possible. The next steps will be discussed in more detail in the next intersessional period of SGCCR.

Regarding activity no. (2), the SGCCR welcomes the ongoing discussions of the SGMP regarding a better incorporation of climate change issues into management of protected areas (*see WP 48 SGMP report*). Supporting these developments, the SGCCR likes to reflect the idea highlighted by one of the SGCCR members to create an inventory of projects/studies/scientific results for science relevant for a protected area system.

With prioritized activity no. (3) which focuses on the NNS Manual, the SGCCR members offer support to determine in the next intersessional period whether aspects of climate change and climate change adaptation have been sufficiently addressed in the existing version from 2019 to give feedback for improvements to the responsible NNS manual authors. The SGCCR notes that Australia, New Zealand and the United Kingdom continued with the review of IMO and ATS guidelines and agreements concerning ship biofouling and ballast water management (*see WP 14 and IP 9*)

Ongoing developments for the activity no. (4), which addresses the common concerns and options to better preserve marine ecosystems in the light of climate change, can be seen in the planning of the next Joint CEP/SC-CCAMLR Workshop for 2024 (*see WP 12 on Joint CEP/SC-CAMLR workshop preparation by France*). In addition, SGCCR members reported on several research activities to extend the knowledge base.

With activity no. (5), some SGCCR members raised the important topic to prevent hazards by formerly contaminated sites linked to the climate change driven melting of ice and permafrost. Although the necessary cleanup may affect only a few states, the SGCCR likes to ask affected Parties to address this challenge in a timely manner and would welcome regular reports on potential pollution threats in areas at particular risk by ongoing climate change.

The listed activity no. (6), aims at understanding the environmental consequences and impacts on natural and heritage values due to climate change impact to the built environment, and refers, *inter alia*, to the exchange with COMNAP in previous intersessional periods as well as on the former COMNAP contributions on modernization of Antarctic Stations (e.g., ATCM XLII, IP 47; ATCM XLIII, BP 10). SGCCR welcomes the ongoing work to develop a tool to assess the risk of climate change impacts on Antarctic heritage values as direct contribution to the work of the SGCCR (see *IP 102 by Argentina, Australia, New Zealand, Norway, United Kingdom and SCAR*). The SGCCR likes to motivate all CEP members to timely assess the risk of climate change effects for their existing and projected infrastructure and associated environmental consequences.

***Recommendation***

Germany on behalf of the SGCCR recommends that the CEP members continue to work actively for the implementation of the CCRWP and to prioritise the proposed six activities.