Draft Comprehensive Environmental Evaluation (CEE) for the renovation of Petrel Base, Dundee Island, Antarctica"

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***Working Paper submitted by Argentina***

Summary

The National Directorate of the Antarctic (DNA) of the Argentine Republic, in its capacity as appropriate authority of the Protocol on Environmental Protection to the Antarctic Treaty, prepared this Comprehensive Environmental Evaluation (CEE) with the purpose of renovating the Petrel base while the scientific and operational activities of the Argentine Antarctic Programme (PAA) are being maintained at said base, both at sites on the ground and at the facilities that the base supports. This CEE project has been prepared following the requirements of Article 3, Annex I to the Protocol on Environmental Protection to the Antarctic Treaty and the Revised Guidelines for Environmental Impact Assessment in Antarctica-Resolution 1 (2016) and the applicable laws of Argentina.

The activities that make up the project consist of: renovation and use of the Base facilities; construction and use of a new runway for airplanes; construction of a Photovoltaic Central; improvements in the use and consumption of water supply lagoons. The estimated time range for the activity encompasses the period from the summer of 2023/2024 to the end of the summer of 2028/2029. After a comprehensive evaluation of the proposed activities and their related mitigation measures, it has been concluded that the proposed activities are likely to have a greater than minimal or transitory impact on the Antarctic environment. We thus conclude through this CEE project that the proposed activities should proceed on the basis that the positive impacts in terms of improvements to safety, environmental protection, and ability to support science are greater than the negative impacts associated with the proposed activities.

***CEE dissemination and translation***

The Secretariat of the Antarctic Treaty distributed the notification on the availability of the CEE to all Parties through Secretariat Circular 4 (30 January 2023). The president of the CEP reported this through CEP Circular 3 (31 January 2023). In addition, the Secretariat made available to Committee members, on the CEP workspace within its website (https://www.ats.aq/devAS/EP/CEPWorkspace), both the Non-Technical Summary and the complete package of files that make up the CEE project, in the four official languages of the Antarctic Treaty.

In accordance with the *Procedures for intersessional CEP consideration of draft CEEs* (Appendix 3 of the Final Report of the 20th Meeting of the CEP), an intersessional contact group (ICG), coordinated by New Zealand, was established to carry out the review of the CEE project. The ICG correspondence was made available to CEP Members and Observers through the CEP discussion forum, which also provided the Non-Technical Summary (NTS) translated into the official languages of the Treaty.

***Non-Technical Summary and CEE Conclusions***

The NTS is attached as Annex A to this document. The NTS includes a description of the activities that are proposed to be carried out, the stages of completion, the evaluation of alternatives, the environmental conditions, the identification and forecast of impacts, the mitigation measures, the monitoring programme and the conclusions.

In 1976 the Petrel Base became a temporary summer base after a fire destroyed its main house room. From that moment on, the activity at this base was significantly reduced, limited to periodic maintenance for short periods of time in the austral summer. Its air activities were transferred to the Marambio base, which has constituted the hub for the Argentine Antarctic Programme air activities from 1976 to the present.

In recent years, the increase in scientific activity of the Argentine Antarctic Programme, added to changes in climatic conditions and the new logistic means incorporated into the activity, has made us rethink the way we carry out our science and the consequent logistical support required. Therefore, the development of the Petrel base has emerged in response to the inconveniences that arise in the access, operation and maintenance of the Marambio base in order to support the activity of the Argentine Antarctic Programme.

Through the Environmental Impact Assessment process, the National Antarctic Directorate of the Argentine Republic concluded that the level of impact of the proposed activity is acceptable considering the important benefits that it would bring. Among them, it is worth highlighting improvements in environmental terms, and the possibility of expanding scientific and logistical collaboration with other Antarctic programmes, which will open up new opportunities for international scientific cooperation. On the other hand, positive effects would be verified on the scientific programme of the Argentine Antarctic Programme, due to the greater efficiency of resources and greater capacities, thus offering a better platform for scientific research currently underway in Antarctica.

***Response to the ICG***

Argentina appreciates the comments and recommendations on the CEE presented by the ICG coordinated by New Zealand. Argentina will present a preliminary response to the comments received to date through an Information Paper and also during the presentation of the CEE on the occasion of the XXV Meeting of the CEP.

Both the comments raised during the ICG process and any other observation made during the debates of the XXV Meeting of the CEP will be taken into account for the final CEE.