United States Report of Inspection, February 2020

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Information Paper submitted by the United States

Summary

The United States conducted an inspection pursuant to the Antarctic Treaty and the Protocol on Environmental Protocol to the Antarctic Treaty (the Protocol) from February 7 – 10, 2020. The attached report describes the observations and conclusions of the Inspection Team. A summary of those observations and conclusions is included in this Information Paper.

Introduction

The United States conducted its fifteenth inspection since the Antarctic Treaty entered into force in 1961 and the first since December 2012. From February 7 – 10, 2020, the U.S. Inspection Team inspected Mario Zucchelli Station and Boulder Clay runway (Italy – ITA); Jang Bogo Station (Republic of Korea – ROK); the station under construction on Inexpressible Island (People’s Republic of China – PRC); and Antarctic Specially Protected Area (ASPA) 161, Terra Nova Bay, Ross Sea.

The United States conducted the inspection pursuant to Article VII of the Antarctic Treaty of 1959 and Article 14 of the Protocol. Article VII of the Antarctic Treaty and Article 14 of the Protocol grant to Antarctic Treaty Consultative Parties the right of unannounced inspection of stations, installations, equipment, aircraft and vessels in Antarctica. Article VII states that designated observers shall have complete freedom of access at any time to any and all areas of Antarctica, including via aerial observation. Article 14 of the Protocol also provides that inspections should promote the protection of the Antarctic environment and dependent and associated ecosystems, and compliance with the Protocol.

General Conclusions

Prior to the inspection, the United States reviewed information from Antarctic Treaty Secretariat, Council of Managers of National Antarctic Programs (COMNAP), and national government websites. During the inspection, the Inspection Team used checklists developed by the ATCM to guide the observers. After the inspection, the United States provided Parties whose facilities had been inspected an opportunity to comment on the draft report and took into account the comments received. On the basis of that information, the Inspection Team reached the following general observations and conclusions.

The Inspection Team was warmly welcomed and given complete freedom of access to all areas of the three stations inspected and found no violations of Treaty provisions reserving Antarctica solely for peaceful purposes. Each of the stations was well-managed and impressive in terms of their general facilities and professional character. Officials from each welcomed international collaboration on scientific research and were committed to increasing use of renewable energy at their station. The Team commended the collaboration amongst the PRC, Italy and the Republic of Korea to establish a new ASPA at Inexpressible Island (ATCM XLII, WP 47, *Proposal for a new Antarctic Specially Protected Area at Inexpressible Island and Seaview Bay, Ross Sea*).

The Inspection Team encourages all Parties to continue to increase scientific efficiency through international collaboration, including the submission of underlying data to relevant collaborative databases and the publication of peer-reviewed scientific findings. The Team also encourages all Parties to share with other Parties, particularly those considering building new or upgrading existing stations, their successes and challenges in installing and using renewable energy.

The Inspection Team encourages the station under construction on Inexpressible Island to consider scheduling communications with the nearby ITA and ROK stations to further develop its emergency contingency plans. It encourages all Parties to ensure communications connectivity, including providing to COMNAP reliable contact information and monitoring communications equipment.

The Inspection Team encourages all Parties to maintain or increase the information they share to the ATCM and public about their operations in Antarctica. In particular, the Team calls attention to the significant disparity in the use of the Electronic Information Exchange System (EIES) by national programs. It also strongly encourages the PRC to submit as soon as possible a final CEE, as required under Annex I, Article 3(6) to the Protocol. The Team notes that this should have occurred before the construction activities observed by the Team had started and encourages the PRC to regularly update the ATCM about the progress of the construction of the station on Inexpressible Island.