Closing of the Arctowski Polish Antarctic Station for tourist traffic due to the COVID-19 pandemic and the ongoing renovation of station facilities

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**An Information Paper submitted by Poland**

***Summary***

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic and the ongoing renovation of Station facilities, the Polish Antarctic Station is closed to tourist traffic. This decision remains valid until further notice.

***Background***

The Arctowski Polish Antarctic Stationis a year-round research facility managed by the Institute of Biochemistry and Biophysics of the Polish Academy of Sciences. Ongoing and previous research in the fields of biology, oceanography, geology, geomorphology, glaciology, meteorology, and seismology, have been undertaken at the station. Continuous ecological, glaciological, hydrological, meteorological, and marine monitoring programs are also conducted at and around the station. For over 40 years, the station has provided technical and logistic support for Polish and international scientific groups conducting research in the Antarctic. As a consequence of the current pandemic and ongoing renovation of the station, we are forced to take action to maintain the ongoing research, as well as the safety of personnel, at the station. We are committed to maintaining and enhancing the quality of Polish Antarctic scientific research; however, current circumstances dictate that our ability to support science and building process is extremely limited. Nevertheless, long-term science monitoring, essential operational activities, and planned maintenance will go ahead as previously planned. The station has limited medical facilities, therefore, in the event of any emergencies, the crew of the station, builders, and visitors are completely dependent on rescuers from other nations stationed on King George Island. To ensure the safety, health, and well-being of Polish scientific expedition members, building workers, and visitors, as well as to keep Antarctica COVID-19-free, the Arctowski Polish Antarctic Station will be closed for touristic traffic until further notice.