Response to Australia's 2019/2020 Inspection Observations

English version provided by the author

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**Information Paper submitted by the Russian Federation**

In the 2019/2020 season Australia inspected several Antarctic stations in accordance with Article 7 of the Antarctic Treaty and Article 14 of the Protocol on Environmental Protection to the Antarctic Treaty, including the area of the closed Soviet station Molodezhnaya. A report on the results of the inspection was submitted by Australia.

The Russian side thanks Australia for the comments and recommendations with regard to compliance with the Protocol's requirements and reaffirms the important role of inspections under Antarctic Treaty activities.

Molodezhnaya station was the largest Soviet station, with accommodations of up to 700 people, located on a vast territory and included several dozen of buildings and structures.

The wintering station was closed in 1990. Since 2006, some of the buildings were used periodically as a seasonal base with limited personnel, whose task included maintaining infrastructure facilities in an accident-free state, preparing of a runway for ski-aircraft and scheduled removal of waste from past activities with a total weight of up to 50 tons each season by ship.

2019/2020 season turned out to be unusually warm for East Antarctica, where Molodezhnaya and Mirny stations are located. Due to this, various “historical” objects and areas buried under long-term snow cover, thawed out in a short but warm summer. At present, to eliminate the remarks of the inspection a plan of priority measures for the coming seasons has been prepared.

Unfortunately, in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Russian Antarctic Expedition is very limited in carrying out of seasonal logistics operations, including environmental activities at Molodezhnaya station, but some tasks will be completed as soon as possible.

In general, the outdated infrastructure of Molodezhnaya station will require a complex of large-scale measures, including the removal of fuel in tanks on the old fuel storage, dismantling of unusable buildings and structures, reclamation of the territory in accordance with the CEP Antarctic Clean-up Manual, waste removal by ship, etc., as well as an assessment of the impact of activities on the environment.

Measures to clean up the area of the former Soviet Molodezhnaya station (from 2023 to 2030) are provided for by the Strategy for the Development of the Russian Federation's Activities in Antarctica until 2030, which was approved by the Government of the Russian Federation in August 2020.