Competent authorities discussion forum on tourism regulatory activities: report by the convener

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Summary

ATCM XLII in 2019 established a permanent web-based forum for competent authorities to discuss tourism regulatory activities and exchange knowledge and experience. The forum is convened by the working group co-chair with responsibility for the ATCM tourism agenda item. This paper reports on the commencement of discussion of five issues identified as a priority for initial focus, in accordance with the agreed scope and purpose of the forum. Parties are encouraged to have their competent authorities participate in the work of the group as appropriate.

Background

The convened competent authorities discussion forum is intended to discuss tourism-related issues of general relevance to the competent authorities, and enhance cooperation across a range of issues. As reported in ATCM XLII IP 58, the group has established a scope and purpose under the mandate provided by ATCM XLII (below), identified five priority issues for initial focus of discussion, and discussed opportunities for enhanced cooperation.

Priority issues for discussion

In the 2021-22 intersessional period, the Convener initiated discussion of the five priority issues for initial focus:

* Harmonisation of standards;
* Nested permits / permits where multiple activities are authorised by different Parties on the same expedition;
* Compliance and enforcement issues of common interest to the competent authorities (excluding arrangements under national legislation);
* Issues arising from new activities or those seldom conducted, and potentially risky activities;
* Scientific activities associated with tourism activities.

To assist in the discussion, the Convener provided topic summaries for each of the issues. These summaries were intended to ensure participants had ready reference to previous consideration and discussion of the topic in the ATCM and related forums, and any relevant ATCM tools or arrangements (for example communication and cooperation mechanisms). Each of the topic summaries included: an introduction and summary of the issue, review of existing ATCM tools, instruments or arrangements of relevance to the topic; and previous discussions or proposals relating to the topic. The topic summaries are available to Parties on the web-based forum.

In moving to the discussion of these issues, the convener has invited participants to share information for each topic (among other things) on:

* general points or observations including new views or aspects, new developments, points of particular concern, priorities, or other perspectives
* particular tools, practices or procedures that may be of interest to other competent authorities
* additional tools that would be of assistance in dealing with this topic
* suggestions for taking forward discussion of the topic or key elements
* whether the topic might be particularly suited to an online videoconference discussion, workshop, webinar, or ‘best-practice’ session.

Discussions will continue in the coming intersessional period, with the objective of identifying options to support the competent authorities in relation to each issue, including where advice to the ATCM via delegations may be useful. Additional issues will be discussed following consideration of the initial five issues, depending on the priority assigned by participants. Participants will consider options for enhanced cooperation and discussion, including potential virtual, online or videoconference discussion and opportunities to share experiences and best practice, in the 2022/23 intersessional period. Consistent with the scope and purpose of the discussions, the group will also consider as necessary new and emerging issues of relevance.

The convened forum is open to participation by all national competent authorities and wide participation is encouraged.

*Scope and purpose:*

The competent authorities will consider issues related to authorisation of tourism and non-governmental activities that have general relevance for most competent authorities, with a view to:

* identifying specific challenges and opportunities for enhanced cooperation in the implementation of the Protocol, ATCM Measures and Resolutions;
* identifying for ATCM consideration emerging issues related to tourism regulation; and
* formulating advice to the ATCM, via delegations, on specific relevant issues related to the evaluation and authorisation of tourist and non-governmental activities.

The forum will be convened by the ATCM working group chair responsible for the tourism agenda item. Discussion will be guided by a work plan, and will address issues as agreed by participants, including new and emerging issues as necessary. The convened forum is open to participation by all national competent authorities and wide participation is encouraged. The convened forum is not intended to replace the other web-based forums for discussion and consultation on specific tourism and non-government activity proposals.