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 discussion in the intersessional period of 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. The group has established a scope and purpose under the mandate provided by ATCM XLII (below), identified and shared views on five priority issues for initial discussion, and discussed opportunities for enhanced cooperation.

Priority issues for discussion

In the 2022-23 intersessional period, in continuation of work commenced in the previous intersessional period, the Convener invited further views from participants on the five priority issues identified 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.

Participants were invited to share views and information for each topic 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 were supported by topic summaries for each of the issues, prepared by the Convener, which were intended to provide ready reference to previous discussion of each topic in the ATCM, and existing ATCM tools or arrangements. 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.

In addition, participants were invited to raise any new or emerging issues facing competent authorities, and provide views on further cooperation and discussion among competent authorities.

Outcomes of discussions

The competent authorities from four Parties provided input to discussions. Views and perspectives were provided on aspects of the priority issues.

Suggestions were also received on additional topics of possible common interest, and on options for advancing discussions, including online meetings and email contact groups. Some participants noted challenges in advancing issues though online forum written discussions, and suggested that online meetings would provide additional opportunities to make progress. Some participants suggested a meeting during the ATCM between competent authorities or their representatives. Accordingly, the Convener will coordinate with participants on an informal margins meeting of competent authorities or their representatives during ATCM XLV.

In the coming intersessional period, input provided to date by the participating competent authorities will be summarised and shared. Additional input would be welcomed. The Convener will also discuss opportunities, topics, format, hosting and timing of a possible online meeting with interested participants, and stands ready to support ongoing discussions.

These discussions are open to 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.