Fourth report of the Intersessional Contact Group on Education and Outreach

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Working Paper submitted by Bulgaria, Belgium, Brazil, Chile, Portugal, Spain and UK

***Summary***

At ATCM XLII (2019) in Prague, Parties decided to continue the work of the intersessional contact group (ICG) on Education and Outreach, following a number of Terms of reference related to Education and Outreach. As well as the last year the ATCM in Finland was cancelled, the work of ICG on Education and Outreach continued over two years. As requested by the Meeting, this paper aims to provide a summary on the discussions taken within the ICG and recommends considerations by the ATCM of the outcomes of the intersessional work. Overall, there are 25 posts (up to 27.04.2021) from 7 Parties, Observers and Experts comprising 425 views within the forum, particularly on national and international education and outreach activities.

***Background***

The ICG on Education and Outreach was established during ATCM XXXVIII (2015) in Sofia and it was followed by a very successful workshop in which ninety-seven participants from thirty-seven Parties, Observers and Experts took part. During ATCM XXXIX (2016) in Santiago, Bulgaria introduced WP 24 *First Report on the Intersessional Contact Group on Education and Outreach,* jointly prepared with Belgium, Brazil, Chile, Portugal and the United Kingdom. The ATCM recognised the contribution of Parties and the usefulness of the ICG’s work. Parties were advised to continue to use and promote the forum on Education and Outreach to share information on Education and Outreach activities and events with each other. Contributions to Education and Outreach activities from an Antarctic Treaty Perspective remains within the Multi-Year Strategic Work Plan of the ATCM.

As stated in the final report of ATCM XLII (2019) in Prague, paragraph 208, the Meeting agreed to continue the ICG on Education and Outreach for another intersessional period, and agreed to the following terms of reference:

* Foster collaboration at both the national and international level, on Education and Outreach;
* Identify key international activities/events related to education and outreach for possible engagement by the Antarctic Treaty Parties;
* Share results of education and outreach initiatives that demonstrate the work of Antarctic Treaty Parties in managing the Antarctic Treaty area;
* Emphasise ongoing environmental protection initiatives that had been informed by scientific observations and results, in order to reinforce the importance of the Antarctic Treaty and its Protocol on Environmental Protection;
* Promote related education and outreach activities by Experts and Observers, and encourage cooperation with these groups;
* Discuss the possibility for the creation of an Antarctic Education and Outreach section on the Antarctic Treaty System (ATS) website.

Belgium, Bulgaria, Brazil, Chile, Portugal, Spain and the United Kingdom will continue to form the Core Group which will moderate this forum.

***Method of Operation***

The ICG operates using the online ATCM Discussion Forum, under the topic ‘ICG on Education and Outreach’. The discussion is open to all Parties, Observers and Experts. Currently there are 38 points of contact listed as participating in the ICG. Of these 7 parties and observers and experts (up to 27.04.2021) have participated in the forum. The ICG began work with an opening announcement by the convener 15th October 2019. The work plan was arranged in three stages:

* Stage 1: Opening announcement with opening notes, proposed timetable and working scheme;
* Stage 2: Requesting parties to provide initial comments, proposals and sharing information on ToR issues;
* Stage 3: Preparation and submission of Working Paper report of the ICG for ATCM.

Taking in account that the last year`s ATCM was postponed, the work of the ICG continued over a period of two years.

***Discussions***

There are 25 posts (up to 27.04.2021) from 7 parties, observers and experts (Belgium, Bulgaria, Czech Republic, India, Portugal, UK and COMNAP). There are 16 topics and 425 views within the forum: *Opening Announcement*; *Celebrating Fernão de Magalhães/Fernand Magellan/Hernando de Magallanes*; *Antarctica Day 2019*; *UN Conference on Oceans: links to the Antarctic Treaty*; *Special issue on Polar Education and Outreach;* *Contributions of Belgian scientists to Education and Outreach related to Antarctica*; *COMNAP Workshop 2019*; *Czech Republic - Education and Outreach activities - 2019;* *POLAR WEEKS 2020 and ongoing Outcomes*; *Bulgaria - Education and Outreach Activities march 2020-march 2021*; *UK public engagement in a new polar research ship, enhancing diversity in polar science and education and outreach during a global pandemic; APECS report on E & O 2020*.

The pandemic coronavirus disease COVID19 required most of the reported activities to be carried out online or in accordance with the pandemic restrictions in different countries.

A number of activities celebrating the 500th anniversary of the first World circumnavigation made by the expedition of Fernão de Magalhães/Fernand Magellan/Hernando de Magallanes in 1519 were discussed and noted.

Some Parties (Czech Republic, Belgium and Bulgaria) shared information about their education and outreach activities in the intersessional period. Belgium shared a very positive experience of an itinerant exhibition, Antarctica, by Luc Jacquet.

POLAR WEEKS and Antarctica Day celebrations were shared with numerous online activities organised by the different countries. Digital technologies such as Zoom, Microsoft Teams and Webinars provide effective online platforms to connect polar scientists, schools and general public. As an example, Association of Polar Early Career Scientists (APECS) Portugal and PEI (Polar Educators International) carried out a POLAR WEEK in September 2020 and engaged 11152 students, 12 Antarctic scientists and 78 teachers/educators with related partners; and British Antarctic Survey’s Antarctica Week 10 zoom webinars attracted over 70000 viewers and a further 1800 viewings of the recordings. The estimated total audience for #AntarcticaWeek posts shared across BAS, and external social media was 1.03 million.

A UK STEM campaign built around the high profile and public celebration of the new Royal Research Ship – the RRS *Sir David Attenborough* over three days 26-28 September engaged millions of school children from Britain and around the world*.*

Council of Managers of National Antarctic Programs (COMNAP) reported the outcome from the half day Education and Outreach Workshop called “Communicating the Importance of our Antarctic Research”, which was held during the Annual General Meeting XXXI (2019) in Plovdiv, Bulgaria. During the workshop, national Antarctic programs shared their experiences in launching a general public campaign through the media and live updates about the current and future work of the Antarctic programs. In the report it was emphasised the importance of the usage of digital media, online platforms and modern technology for reaching out to the better communities between Antarctic stations and general public.

The article, “Education and outreach by the Antarctic Treaty Parties, Observers and Experts under the framework of the Antarctic Treaty Consultative Meetings”, in the special Issue on Education and Outreach by the journal Polar Records, reflecting on Education, Outreach and Engagement ten years after the International Polar Year 2007-8, was shared widely online.

***Recommendations***

The ICG recommends that the ATCM

* Recognizes the usefulness of the Forum on Education and Outreach
* Advises the Parties to keep promoting the usage of the Forum to provide information of their activities related to Education and Outreach
* Encourage key international activities/events related to education and outreach that Parties can engage
* Advises the Parties to continue to promote not only Antarctica and Antarctic research through their Education and Outreach Activities but the Antarctic Treaty and Environmental Protocol itself.