Report of the Intersessional Contact Group (ICG) on Post-Visit Reports

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Working Paper submitted by Argentina as the ICG Convener

Summary

During ATCM 42, and following the discussions held after the presentation of WP 66 “Reviewing requirements for exchanging information on non-governmental expeditions” (Argentina), the Meeting agreed to establish an ICG on the Review of Post-Visit Reports.

The ICG was assigned the following Terms of Reference (ToR):

* To examine the content of the format of the Post-Visit Report contained in Resolution 6 (2005) relative to the information exchange requirements.
* To propose modifications to the Post-Visit Report that would facilitate full compatibility between the information exchange requirements and these reports.
* To submit the results of the analysis and the proposed changes to the ATCM 43, with the aim of updating Resolution 6 (2005).

Background

Through WP 66 (ATCM 42), Argentina raised different issues related to the exchange of information on non-governmental activities under the premise that the efficiency of the tools that are designed for tourism monitoring is based on more precise evidence to allow for better informed decisions. In this sense, it was also noted that while the information exchange requirements have been subject to past reviews and now include a rather wide range of data to be exchanged, it was still possible to improve them so that Parties have a more complete overview of tourism activities in the Antarctic Treaty area, thereby assisting decision-making. Among the issues raised, the need to revise the format and content of Post-Visit Reports was also noted.

As was indicated by Argentina in WP 66, the Post-Visit Report, completed one per trip by tour operators for referral to their National Competent Authority, is the main source of information that National Programmes depend on for completing their data on non-governmental operations that they must submit in accordance with the Annex of Decision 5 (2016)[[1]](#footnote-1).

The format and content of the Post-Visit Report was adopted through Resolution 6 (2005), but has not been modified since then, even though the information exchange~~s~~ requirements have been[[2]](#footnote-2). It was consequently pointed out by Argentina that it would be useful to review the consistency between both tools, as they should mirror each other.

Argentina proposed that the ATCM establish an ICG to review the compatibility between information exchange requirements and Post-Visit Reports.

As stated in the ATCM 42 Final Report (paragraph 404), several Parties reiterated the importance of maintaining comprehensive and up-to-date information on non-governmental activities in order to support evidence-based decision making.

Organisation of discussions

The forum operated during the intersessional period that extended between ATCM 42 and 43 (2019 / 2021). Argentina, Australia, Spain, France, United Kingdom, United States, Uruguay, ASOC and IAATO, participated in three discussion rounds and commented on the paper and provided valuable input.

A discussion paper was proposed to serve as a basis for work during the three rounds and to reflect progress on each point raised.

In order to meet the first two ToRs, in the opening announcement of the ICG, Argentina proposed to divide the work into two steps.

As a first step, Argentina made a preliminary comparative analysis between the current content of Decision 7 (2019), IAATO IP 89 (2005) “Proposed Amendments to the Standard Post Visit Report Form by the IAATO” and the PVR format adopted through Resolution 6 (2005), agreed to after discussions held during the presentation of IP 89, in order to review the consistency between both tools, as they should mirror each other.

Argentina presented the results of this preliminary analysis in a document for the consideration of the participants. In this document, amendments were proposed to the PVR so as to facilitate full compatibility of the PVRs with the information exchange requirements.

In the second step Argentina proposed to discuss additional aspects related to the current PVR format and raised a series of questions. Different aspects like the addition of new sections to the PVR and EIES, options for reporting a trip under the combined flight/ship mode, definitions of incidents and tourist activities, the revision and updating of the PVR, as well as the access and availability of the document, were discussed thoroughly.

Finally, a first draft of the revised version of the PVR and its instructions, resulting from the first two rounds of discussions, was presented. Participants commented on the drafts, suggested modifications and provided valuable input on aspects to be taken into account.

The final discussion paper and the discussions of each round are available on the ATCM forum.

General overview of the outcomes of the discussion

**Decision 7 (2019) compared to PVR Resolution 6 (2005)**

From the analysis conducted, differences were found between both tools. It was noted that there were fields in the PVR format that weren´t included in the information exchange requirements contained in Decision 7 (2019) and the relevance of their inclusion was assessed. Among those fields present in the PVR and not in the information requirements, the addition of a field for unusual incidents was considered but the type of information to be included therein still requires further discussions.

**The utility of current PVR format to report all current non-governmental travel modalities**

Participants agreed that in order to reflect new travel modalities, such as package tours, some modifications to the PVR format would be appropriate.

From the analysis carried out, it was agreed to add a new section both in the PVR form (Part 1 A: Expedition Details, "combined activity" / Part 2: list of activities the option "transfer of passengers") and in the information exchange format to better reflect journeys under the responsibility of more than one operator.

Consequently, there is a need to modify the information requested in Decision 7 (2019) in order to incorporate information on "combined activity” into section 2.2.2 Non-governmental expeditions in its sections A) Vessel-based Operations, B) Land-based Operations and C) Aircraft Activities.

**To improve the registrations in order to develop better management tools**

*Site visited*

Participants agreed on the idea of enhancing the sites registration to increase its standardization and precision, and recognised the importance of keeping the list of sites up to date and having a correlation between the EIES and the PVR.

During the PVR review, in the "site visited" section of the PVR, the list provided by the ATS was incorporated in order to continue the alignment with EIES.

While participants agreed that an update will be required each time a NCA adds a new site, whether this should be done automatically by the ATS or a "review/update period" for the PVR be established and changes be introduced on a regular basis, needed further discussion.

*Activities at Site*

Discussions on this point were conducted under the premise that all activities carried out are evaluated previously by the corresponding national authority, and the PVR and EIES form a post-activity reporting system which plays no role in approval or authorisation processes.

With the same criteria as in the column for "sites visited", participants saw merit in enhancing the description of activities carried out at each site. To improve recording, the participants agreed to incorporate into the drop-down menu: the list of activities mentioned in IAATO IP 145 (2019) and the options "other" and "passenger transfer". In this sense, and to minimize errors when selecting activities, the definitions from IP 145 (2019) were added to the PVR instructions.

In order to have a correlation between the activities reported by the Parties in the EIES and the PVR, there was support to request the ATS to incorporate the agreed activities in the list of EIES.

In relation to the best way to keep this list updated, further discussions are still pending. While some participants indicated that it could be a task for the ATS as new activities are reported in the EIES, others prefer that a periodic review be carried out.

**Availability of the PVR Form**

Participants agreed that it would be helpful to have a PVR form available to be downloaded from the ATS website, and it was pointed out that the structure of the form should not be editable (i.e., no possibility to modify the list of landing sites or activities).

Like within the "site visited" and "activities" sections, debates on the best way to keep the PVR form updated also require further discussions.

***Conclusions***

As a result of the work of the Parties during the ICG, the revised PVR form and instructions are hereby submitted to the ATCM for adoption (see Attachment 1 and 2), with the modifications agreed by participants. Likewise, it is proposed to amend the Requirements for Exchanging Information on Non-Governmental Expeditions (Decision 7 (2019)) to incorporate "combined activity" information into section 2.2.2 Non-governmental shipments under A) Ship-based operations, B) Shore-based operations and C) Aircraft activities.

The opportunity of having a space for discussion on the ATS website constitutes a concrete response to the relevance assigned by participants to debate on issues related to Tourism and the Exchange of Information in Antarctica. In this sense, these deliberations have been very fruitful and promising, and it would therefore be desirable to keep the momentum and continue these initial and very productive discussions through this forum.

Recommendation

It is recommended that the ATCM:

* Accepts the proposed modifications of the information exchange requirements identified by the ICG and modifies Decision 7 (2019), accordingly.
* Accepts the proposed modifications of the Post Visit Report form attached to this Working Paper and modify Resolution 6 (2005) accordingly.
* Requests that the Antarctic Treaty Secretariat updates the corresponding fields in the EIES and integrate the PVR form for download from the ATS website in the Tourism and Non-Governmental Activities section and in the four official languages.
* Encourage the Parties to continue discussing on these issues.

1. Currently Decision 7 (2019). [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Decision 6 (2013) refers to Resolution 6 (2005), without modifying it. It indicates the need “2. to revise the Electronic Information Exchange System (“EIES”) to include:  
   a) a list of non-governmental ship-based and land-based expedition activities from which Parties can select one or more for reporting in annual information, to be aligned with the activity fields in the Post Visit Site Report Form endorsed in Resolution 6 (2005), with the flexibility to enter additional activities; and  
   b) the number of visitors that participate in each of the specific activities”;

   Decision 5 (2016) neither mentions Resolution 6 (2005) nor modifies it. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)