Report of the Informal Discussion on Post-Visit Reports

Report of the Informal Discussion on Post-Visit Reports

Working Paper submitted by Argentina as the ICG Convener

Summary

ATCM XLIII (§ 252 of the Final Report) agreed to continue informal discussions on Post-Visit Reports during a new intersessional period. This report summarizes these discussions and formulates proposals for ATCM XLIV.

Background

As a result of discussions following WP 61(ATCM XLIII) submitted by Argentina, the Meeting agreed to continue informal discussions on Post-Visit Reports during the intersessional period, noting that these discussions would focus on: methods for ensuring the list of sites and list of activities in the PVR and EIES were appropriately updated; and further thinking on specifying types of unusual incidents that might be reported through the PVR form.

Organisation of discussions

The informal discussions operated during the 2021-22 intersessional period. Argentina, Australia, France, Germany, United Kingdom, United States and IAATO, participated in two discussion rounds and commented on the document with constructive input.

As a first step, discussions focused on the importance of considering a definition for unusual incidents; the types of incidents and the information to be reported and included in both the PVR and the information exchange requirements.

During the second round, the addition of new sites and activities to the PVR and the revision and updating of the PVR form were discussed, with the objective of improving register to increase its standardization and accuracy.

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

General overview of the outcomes of the discussion

*Unusual incidents*

In order to comply with the meeting’s request, it was considered appropriate to discuss a definition to assist operators in reporting the information that Parties need to know.

As a result of the discussion, at the end of the first round, the following definition of “Unusual Incident” was agreed: “*An undesired or unforeseen event deviating from the activity described in the environmental impact assessment, or the failure of planned mitigation measures, resulting in environmental impacts exceeding those predicted in the environmental impact assessment; and/or negative effects on people; and/or damage to materials or assets; and it may also have led to the cancellation or interruption of the assessed activity and/or required the need for external assistance from outside the Operator´s company or organization*.”

A new contribution was received at the end of the discussions proposing an alternative definition to the already agreed upon by the participants, but due to lack of time it was not possible to be discussed by the other participants.

This contribution proposes an alternative wording on "negative effects on people". The ATCM may consider this new proposal or maintain the definition agreed during the discussions.

Likewise, the participants found it appropriate to include "materials and assets" in the reporting categories, in addition to the environment and safety of people, currently contained in the PVR form.

In Attachment 1, two items were included:

1. Suggestions to modify section D "Report on Expedition by Expedition Leader" (items 2 to 4) in Part 1 of the PVR form, and
2. A proposal to update the reporting requirements of the EIE to ensure consistency between the evolution of the PVR form and the EIES.

Despite this informal group hadn´t terms of reference, and that it did not have a formal task to review the PVR, participants felt that it would be valuable to take these considerations into account.

These items were included for Parties’ considerations at the time they deem it appropriate to update the content of the PVR.

Attachment 2 is the PVR form - in excel format - with all recommended inputs already incorporated.

*Update of the list of sites and activities*

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

At first, two alternatives were presented to deal with those cases where a new activity or site has been added. After discussions, a third alternative that combines the previous two, was elaborated. This new alternative, broadly supported by participants included:

1. "To request the ATS to automatically incorporate the new activities or sites", and
2. "To request the ATS to keep the ATCM informed about new sites and activities reported in the PVRs, as part of the Secretariat report to the ATCM".

This alternative would provide Parties with the information on which to conduct additional analysis or make proposals, without imposing a regular requirement for discussion during the meeting.

Parties are invited to consider whether this new option presented is accepted by the ATCM.

*Update of the PVR form*

The participants supported the need to periodically review the PVR form, based on the continuous growth and diversification of Antarctic tourism. The time lapse to proceed with such reviews is yet to be decided.

***Conclusions***

As a result of the work of the Parties during these two periods of intersessional debates and the valuable contributions of the Experts, it would therefore be desirable to keep the momentum and continue working on this issue in the coming years.

Issues to be discusses include analysing the likely incorporation of new sections in PVR or EIEs, and adding self-explanatory texts of the definitions of each activity. Such discussions should proceed under the premise that the efficiency of the tools designed for tourism monitoring is based on more precise evidence that allows for better informed decisions.

Recommendation

It is recommended that the ATCM:

* Discusses the definition of unusual incidents and the mechanisms to deal with new sites and activities, as described above.
* Consider the proposed modifications to the Post Visit Report form and to the information exchange requirements, included in Attachment 1 of this Working Paper, with a view to incorporate them when the PVR will be updated.