Towards gender-neutral language in the Antarctic Treaty System

Towards gender-neutral language in the Antarctic Treaty System (ATS)

**Working paper submitted by Finland, United Kingdom, Spain, Germany, New Zealand, Norway and France**

**Summary**

In order to promote gender equality and the use of gender-neutral language in our activities concerning Antarctica, Finland and the co-sponsors of this WP would like to:

ASK the ATCM to:

* *Encourage* Parties, Observers and Experts continue promoting inclusivity, equity and diversity in their national Antarctic programs, relevant national authorities and other institutions responsible for Antarctic issues, particularly in respect of gender equality;
* *Task* the Antarctic Treaty Secretariat to review, within existing resources, all relevant Antarctic Treaty documents that pertain to current and future cooperation (including, for example, the Rules of Procedure of the Antarctic Treaty Consultative Meeting), with a view to ensuring gender-neutral language across these documents;
* *Task* the Antarctic Treaty Secretariat to ensure that personal information requested of ATCM/CEP participants and registration request forms use respectful inclusive terms that embrace the diversity of participants, drawing on best practice;
* *Recommend* that the Parties, Observers and Experts use gender-neutral and respectful inclusive language in spoken and written documentation, reporting and other forms of communication.

Ask the CEP to:

* *Task* the Antarctic Treaty Secretariat to review, within existing resources, all relevant Antarctic Treaty documents that pertain to current and future cooperation (including, for example, the Rules of Procedure for the Committee for Environmental Protection), with a view to ensuring gender-neutral language across these documents.

**Background**

Over the past decades, we have witnessed a significant increase in the participation of women in all their diversity in the Antarctic science and research. The share of women in Antarctic Treaty Consultative Meetings (ATCM) and Committee for Environmental Protection meetings is also increasing, and more and more women are leading their national delegations. In several occasions, Parties have emphasized the importance of equality and inclusiveness in the implementation of the Antarctic Treaty and many countries have announced their commitment to promoting inclusivity and diversity in their national Antarctic programs.

In addition, many international organizations have adopted guidelines for gender-neutral language in their reporting, written, and spoken communication. This is an encouraging development and deserves to be recognized and enhanced. It is not just about using the language correctly; gender-neutral language powerfully reflects and influences attitudes, behavior and perceptions.

Gender-neutral language is a generic term covering the use of non-sexist language, inclusive language or gender-fair language. The purpose of gender-neutral language is to avoid word choices that connect the word or a given concept only to one gender or that may be interpreted as biased, discriminatory or demeaning by implying that one sex or social gender is the norm. Using gender-fair and inclusive language also helps reduce gender stereotyping, promotes social change and contributes to achieving gender equality.

Gender equality is a universal goal that should be strived for in all activities. It is often a matter of us systematically taking into account the importance of gender equality in our own activities, no matter how insignificant the matter may seem. The purpose of this Working Paper in to draw the attention of Parties, Observers and Experts to a certain dimension of the matter, in other words to the use of language in documentation and communication related to Antarctica.

**Recommendations**

In order to promote gender equality and the use of gender-neutral language in our activities concerning Antarctica, Finland and the co-sponsors of this WP would like to:

ASK the ATCM to:

* *Encourage* Parties, Observers and Experts continue promoting inclusivity, equity and diversity in their national Antarctic programs, relevant national authorities and other institutions responsible for Antarctic issues, particularly in respect of gender equality;
* *Task* the Antarctic Treaty Secretariat to review, within existing resources, all relevant Antarctic Treaty documents that pertain to current and future cooperation (including, for example, the Rules of Procedure of the Antarctic Treaty Consultative Meeting) with a view to ensuring gender-neutral language across these documents;
* *Task* the Antarctic Treaty Secretariat to ensure that personal information requested of ATCM/CEP participants and registration request forms use respectful inclusive terms that embrace the diversity of participants, drawing on best practice;
* *Recommend* that the Parties, Observers and Experts use gender-neutral and respectful inclusive language in spoken and written documentation, reporting and other forms of communication.

Ask the CEP to:

* *Task* the Antarctic Treaty Secretariat to review, within existing resources, all relevant Antarctic Treaty documents that pertain to current and future cooperation (including, for example, the Rules of Procedure for the Committee for Environmental Protection), with a view to ensuring gender-neutral language across these documents.