

TRATADO ANTARTICO
XII REUNION CONSULTIVA

TRAITE SUR L'ANTARCTIQUE
XII REUNION CONSULTATIVE



CANBERRA
13-27 SEPTEMBER
1983

ANTARCTIC TREATY
XII CONSULTATIVE MEETING

ДОГОВОР ОБ АНТАРКТИКЕ
XII КОНСУЛЬТАТИВНОЕ СОВЕЩАНИЕ

ANT/XII/6
12 September 1983
Original: English

AGENDA ITEM 6 : MAN'S IMPACT ON THE
ANTARCTIC ENVIRONMENT

(Discussion Paper to be circulated by Australia)

The preservation and conservation of the living resources of Antarctica have been a major concern of the Antarctic Treaty Consultative Parties (ATCPs) since the establishment of the Antarctic Treaty. Article IX of the Treaty specifically lists this concern among the principles and objectives of the Treaty.

In the years since the Treaty came into force there has emerged an evolving system of recommendations and conventions building on this concern expressed in Article IX-1(f). Essentially these measures have been developed in recognition of:

- (i) the need to avoid unnecessary interference with the natural ecological system which is not sufficiently understood and continues to be the subject of research
- (ii) the need to protect Antarctica from pollution by waste disposal to preserve it as an area for global baseline monitoring purposes
- (iii) the role of Antarctica as a major influence on the global climate
- (iv) the possibility of overfishing in Antarctic waters and the desire to protect the integrity of the Antarctic ecosystem
- (v) the scientific importance of the study of Antarctic fauna and flora, their unique nature, adaption to the rigorous environment, interrelationship with their surroundings and their defencelessness and susceptibility to extermination

(vi) the importance of areas used for scientific research and areas of historical interest.

The conventions that have been drawn up are:

(i) The Agreed Measures for the Conservation of Antarctic Flora and Fauna;

(ii) The Convention for the Conservation of Antarctic Seals; and

(iii) The Convention on the Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources.

In addition recommendations on man's activities have been made with respect to:

(i) conduct of Antarctic expeditions and station activities (Rec VIII-11).

(ii) effects of tourism (especially Rec VIII-9, X-8).

(iii) protection of historic sites and monuments (especially Rec VI-14).

(iv) promotion of research of the Antarctic ecosystem, oil contamination, effects of mineral resource activities on Antarctica.

(v) protection of specified areas of research from man's activities by the establishing of sites of special scientific interest (Recs VIII-3 and 4).

(vi) conservation of Antarctic fauna and flora by

protection from unregulated killing, harmful interference by man or the introduction of non indigenous species, parasites and disease and by the establishment of areas giving wildlife special protection (especially Rec III-VIII).

(vii) conservation and rational management of Antarctic seals (especially Rec IV-21 which was the basis for the Convention on the Conservation of Seals).

(viii) conservation and rational management of Antarctic marine living resources (especially Rec IX-2) which led to the Convention on the Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources.

These existing conventions and recommendations provide protection for Antarctic fauna and flora, ensure the conservation of Antarctic marine living resources including seals, and constitute guidelines and directions for minimising man's impact on the Antarctic ecosystem.

In addition there is currently being developed an Antarctic minerals regime that necessarily will contain measures for environmental protection. These measures, while building on the existing environmental protection measures, will most likely, in some instances, be more specific and possibly more rigorous than those now in existence. In addition, because of the need to deal with minerals regime matters in a unified manner, it will be necessary for the regime to provide for a self-contained system of environmental protection measures. Whether these are contained in the minerals regime convention, or are developed through procedures contained in that convention remains to be seen. However it is most likely

that the minerals regime will contain a set of environmental safeguards that are separate from and complementary to the existing combination of measures.

The present system of measures has evolved in parallel with both increasing awareness of the environmental consequences of man's activities and the increase in man's presence and the range of his activities in Antarctica. Because of this evolutionary process we are now in a situation where we have a combination of hortatory measures and others requiring legislation providing protection for various components of the Antarctic environment.

While taken together this combination of measures constitutes a fairly comprehensive system of environmental protection, it is overall a piecemeal system that requires constant attention to ensure that it is adequate to cover the increasing scope of Antarctic activities.

An examination of this combination of environmental protection measures, with its various levels and degrees of specificity and complexity, strongly suggests that there is a need for a review of some kind to draw them all together, possibly with some degree of rationalisation and development. At the Preparatory Meeting in April the United Kingdom circulated an informal paper suggesting that it may be time for ATCPs to consider an overall set of measures for environmental protection.

Chile has proposed a Recommendation (Ant/XII/PREP/8/Rev. 1) reflecting concern that the likely increase in man's activity arising from existing and proposed conventions will not be adequately controlled by the existing system of environmental protection measures.

While it is one thing to acknowledge the arguments that exist for an overall system of measures for the protection of the environment, it is another matter to determine the optimum form and extent of such measures. Careful study of the existing system and of the demands likely to be placed on it by future developments will be necessary. In particular it would be necessary to examine the possible overlap or conflict between different measures: an example would be offshore minerals activities where aspects of CCAMLR, the minerals regime and the Agreed Measures for the Conservation of Antarctic Fauna and Flora could all be involved.

A possible starting point would be for operating nations to begin assessing the impacts of new developments so as to build up a body of knowledge and expertise on this subject. We therefore support the UK proposal for the adoption of Interim Guideline Procedures.

Concurrently attention should be directed to studying the nature of changes that might be made to the system of environmental protection measures in order to achieve optimum effectiveness. Options that might be considered include:

(i) retaining the existing conventions as they are and examining the adoption of new recommendations rationalising and therefore superseding existing recommendations to reflect current and foreseeable circumstances;

(ii) while retaining some or all existing conventions develop new measures to respond to the increasing scope and complexity of man's activities. These new measures could be implemented as a new Agreed Measures (to be

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XII КОНСУЛЬТАТИВНОЕ СОВЕЩАНИЕ

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(Replacement page 5 for document ANT/XII/6)

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(i) retaining the existing conventions as they are and examining the adoption of new recommendations rationalising and therefore superseding existing recommendations to reflect current and foreseeable circumstances;

(ii) while retaining existing conventions develop new measures to respond to the increasing scope and complexity of man's activities. These new measures could be implemented as a new Agreed Measure (to be

enforced by the appropriate constitutional processes in ATCP) to complement the retained measures; or

(iii) develop an integrated convention for the protection of the Antarctic environment. This new convention would subsume previous measures and would lay down standards to which later conventions would conform.