

XXIV ATCM

The Twenty-fourth Antarctic Treaty Consultative Meeting was held in St Petersburg, Russia, 8-20 July 2001. This included meetings of the Committee for Environmental Protection (CEP) and Working Groups I and II. The Meeting welcomed the accession of Estonia to the Antarctic Treaty on 17 May 2001. The Meeting also noted that Poland had submitted its ratification of Annex V and that Indian ratification was in progress. The major highlight of the meeting was the achievement of consensus on the location of an Antarctic Treaty Secretariat in Buenos Aires.

The CEP proposed to undertake a rolling review of the Annexes to the Protocol on Environmental Protection to the Antarctic Treaty. A Resolution was adopted to prevent unrestricted collection of Antarctic meteorites. Resolutions were also adopted on reviewing the list of Historic Sites and Monuments (HSMs) and on guidelines for handling pre-1958 historic remains. Two Measures were adopted to add "A Hut", Scott Base, Ross Island, and the ruins of Base Pedro Aguirre Cerda, Deception Island to the list of HSMs, and a third measure adopted to extend to the expiry dates of eight Sites of Special Scientific Interest to 31 December 2005. Other topics discussed included subglacial Lake Vostok, cumulative impacts, specially protected species, and environmental impact assessment.

Working Group I continued to focus on the issue of an Annex on Environmental Liability with discussion of the text concerning environmental emergencies. Delegations expressed willingness to work on a step-by-step basis but some Delegations still favoured a single comprehensive liability regime. More work remains to be done on some definitions and "worst case scenarios". Other topics discussed included rationalization of information exchange and it was agreed that a central website should be developed.

In Working Group II there was extensive discussion of tourism issues, where particular concern was expressed about the growth of adventure tourism, and it was agreed that tourism should be the subject of detailed discussion at XXV ATCM. Other topics discussed included inspections, development of the shipping guidelines as a "Handbook of Information", science and educational issues.

Poland offered to host XXV ATCM in Warsaw, 3-14 September 2002.