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Welcome to Ukraine!

ECO is pleased to be in the beautiful city of Kyiv for the XXXI ATCM. ECO thanks the hosts of this year's ATCM, which was organised only four years after Ukraine attained Consultative status, but building on a long tradition of Ukrainian scientific involvement in Antarctica and commitment to the Antarctic Treaty and its Protocol. ECO looks forward to a fruitful meeting.

This year the Committee on Environmental Protection and the Antarctic Treaty Consultative Parties have busy agendas, doing their part to protect the Antarctic environment. Given that 2009 will mark the 50th anniversary of the Antarctic Treaty, ECO would like to see action on longer-term, strategic matters at this ATCM.

CEP STRATEGIC PLAN

Many words have been written and spoken on this subject over the past few years. Now is the time for the CEP to finalize its strategic vision of itself, and for the steps to be taken to provide the resources and tools needed for success.

COMMERCIAL TOURISM

Kyiv will be a great opportunity for Antarctic Treaty Parties to develop a shared vision of the future of tourism in the Antarctic.

One strong, proactive step that Parties can take is to adopt a Resolution stating that it does not see unending growth of Antarctic tourism as desirable or necessary. Building on last year's Resolutions, decisions should be made to prevent new land-based tourism infrastructure. ECO would like to see Measure 4 (2004) come into force expeditiously and further steps taken to prevent larger vessels from operating in the Southern Ocean – especially those without adequate ice-strengthening.

ANTARCTIC SHIPPING

Vessel traffic has increased significantly in Antarctic waters over the past decade both in terms of overall numbers and the different types of vessels operating in the area, which raises a number of intrinsic environmental and marine safety issues.



Explorer, November 23, 2007

While there are efforts underway to improve standards for the Antarctic region, not all proposed measures apply to all vessels and many international shipping instruments developed and adopted by the

International Maritime Organization (IMO) over the past decades have not been ratified.

ECO would like to see ATCM work in close cooperation with IMO to set standards for proper ice-strengthening for all vessels operating in the Southern Ocean. This will help ensure that unsuitable vessels are prevented from operating within the Antarctic Treaty Area. ECO hopes that Parties will quickly ratify and implement existing international shipping instruments so that they are in force for the Southern Ocean.

MARINE PROTECTED AREAS

ECO notes that not much progress has been made in recent years in creating MPAs in the Southern Ocean. Partly this is due to the difficulties in lining up CCAMLR and ATCM-related work, partly it is a result of lingering sovereignty issues. ECO hopes that this ATCM will breathe new life into this debate within the Antarctic Treaty System by reaffirming via a Decision its intention to create a representative and coherent network of MPAs as ASPAs and ASMAs. ECO submits the goal should be to have at least 30% of the marine area of the Antarctic Treaty Area placed within MPAs by 2018, with a solid group of representative areas designated by 2012.

AREA PROTECTION

The current rolling annex review process offers an opportunity to consider the effectiveness of Annex V and to review the barriers to effective implementation of current requirements.

While 67 Antarctic Specially Protected Areas and 6 Antarctic Specially Managed Areas have been designated, that means that less than 0.1 % of the Antarctic Area has been afforded special protection, and many of the values identified in Annex V of the Environment Protocol remain under-represented. In particular, Parties appear to have difficulty in declaring any large geographic areas, significant wilderness sites or meaningful marine areas for ASPA level protection.

ECO suggests that the CEP be asked to provide the ATCM with advice on which values and types of sites listed in Annex V are not yet fully represented as designated Protected Areas, in addition to designations that no longer represent best-practice or are otherwise outdated, and best new approaches to address the needs of the 21st century.

LIABILITY ANNEX

ECO is concerned at the slow pace of ratifications of Annex VI – at the present rate it will be decades before it enters into force – and this is only a limited first step in addressing the requirements of Articles 15 and 16 of the Protocol. ECO urges Parties to redouble their efforts to ratify the Annex, with the goal of bringing it

into force during 2009, the 50th anniversary of the Antarctic Treaty, which could be the subject of a Resolution of this ATCM.

CLIMATE CHANGE IMPACTS

Antarctic scientists have reported amazing changes in the Antarctic Peninsula over the past decades: it is warming faster than anywhere else on Earth; plants, birds, seals, micro-organisms there are changing in response to this warming. Some scientists and Treaty Parties are especially worried about the increasing successful invasion of non-indigenous species, in view of the current trends of warming and ever-increasing human visitations.

Climate change is no longer a problem limited to the developed and more populated parts of the world. ECO would like to see Parties recognize that Antarctica is not only an isolated location to *study* climate change but that it, like the rest of world, also is *affected* by climate change. ECO would welcome proactive action from Parties to take proactive action, both inside and outside Antarctica, 1) to mitigate climate change by reducing fossil fuel consumption, and 2) to include considerations of climate change adaptation in management decisions.

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