ECO congratulates the Antarctic Treaty Parties on the signing of the Protocol to the Antarctic Treaty on Environmental Protection. ECO is especially pleased to see that this will guarantee that Antarctica is not only kept off limits for minerals activities for a long time, but is also given legally binding protection.

The Antarctic Treaty Parties should be proud of this accomplishment. ECO is pleased to note that 23 of the 26 Antarctic Treaty Consultative Parties (ATCPs) signed the Protocol itself on October 4. The Parties now have the opportunity to implement the commitment made to environmental protection by speedy ratification of this Protocol at home, and should set about translating words into action on the ice.

ECO feels this Protocol is an encouraging advance, not only for the conservation of Antarctica, but in laying ground for other international global environmental issues.

The Antarctic Treaty has often been accused of not addressing environmental issues in Antarctica properly and of not fully safeguarding the continent's environmental values. It is up to the Consultative Parties to change this perception. They can send a clear message to the world about their commitment by actively promoting the prompt entry into force of the agreement; and by treating the Protocol's measures as if they were binding in the interim.
While appreciating the Protocol’s significant progress, much work still needs to be done, both in refining the details and putting it into practice. Some vital additions are also necessary for the effective operation of the Protocol, including a system-wide Secretariat, annual Antarctic Treaty Consultative Meetings (ATCMs), the negotiation of liability provisions, and a comprehensive approach to Protected Areas.

ECO strongly believes that the public will maintain its interest in and concern for Antarctica, closely following developments on Antarctic issues. The non-governmental community will remain vigilant in its campaign on all activities on the ice to ensure that the Protocol is complied with; and that the Treaty Parties achieve comprehensive - and lasting - protection of the Antarctic environment.

ECO is confident that discussions during the XVI ATCM will lead to many improvements being made to the Protocol in the future. More importantly, however, in the near term, ECO urges all Parties to go beyond the Protocol’s requirements and implement more stringent practices on the ice. ECO looks forward to two productive weeks in Bonn. Let the work begin!

The XVI ATCM may be one of the most significant Antarctic meetings to date. ECO is delighted that a fundamental change has occurred within the Treaty system since the previous ATCM in Paris in 1989: rejecting CRAMRA, the Parties have committed themselves to the concept of comprehensive environmental protection for Antarctica. ECO’s priorities for this ATCM are:

* **Interim Implementation of the Protocol’s Annexed Measures**
  It is important that the Parties waste no time in implementing the Protocol’s detailed measures on environmental impact assessment, conservation of Antarctic fauna and flora, waste disposal and waste management, and marine pollution. Parties must not wait until the Protocol is in force internationally to implement these very basic environmental protection measures in their national programmes. ECO supports this meeting taking action to that end, either by the inclusion of language in the Meeting’s Final Report, or the adoption of a Recommendation, declaring the Parties’ commitment to interim implementation of the Annexes.

ECO also strongly encourages all Parties to enact domestic legislation implementing these measures as a top priority. ECO further recommends that a working group be established to carry out the Committee’s responsibilities until the Committee is formally created.

* **Annual Antarctic Treaty Consultative Meetings**
  Biennial ATCMs have delayed progress within the ATS considerably. Some issues have stayed on agendas for 10 years or more without conclusion. As activities in the Antarctic have increased, and as Antarctica has become a higher priority for many countries, the need for annual meetings has become even more evident. Now, with the adoption of the Protocol to the Antarctic Treaty on Environmental Protection, annual meetings are an imperative - particularly if the Protocol’s EIA provisions are to be effective. ECO urges this meeting to agree to hold ATCMs on an annual basis. ECO recognises that annual meetings could compete with CCAMLR, if held late in the year, and would therefore suggest that the meetings be held in the first half of the year.

* **Secretariat**
  The idea of a Secretariat for the ATS has been discussed at numerous ATCMs, and was on the verge of unanimous support at the XI SCM in Vina del Mar. As the number of
Parties has steadily increased, the system has become unwieldy and not as effective as it could be. A Secretariat would greatly facilitate operations, and could act as a central clearinghouse for Treaty documents and general Antarctic information. It is more necessary than ever, as the Protocol brings with it a number of new reporting requirements and greater availability of information to the public. ECO encourages Parties to take swift action toward establishing such a body at this meeting.

* Committee on Environmental Protection -
The Protocol charges the ATCM with further developing the functions of the Committee on Environmental Protection. ECO submits that Parties should begin at this meeting to round out the responsibilities of the Committee to include, inter alia: assisting Parties with the new EIA procedures and the preparation of EIA documents; serving as a forum to discuss and investigate controversial environmental issues (e.g. the airstrip at Dumont d’Urville and the sinking of the Bahia Paraiso); and acting as a warning bell for potential cumulative environmental impacts.

* Inspections -
The Protocol regrettably falls short of establishing an independent Inspectorate to monitor for compliance with the Protocol’s provisions. The ATCM must, at the very least, develop a standardised format for inspection reports, including an environmental checklist, similar to that tabled by the US in 1989. ECO believes this meeting must begin the process of collective inspections by agreeing to a schedule of such inspections to be carried out by Parties, beginning in the 1992/93 season.

* Liability -
The ATCM must agree to the timely negotiation of an Annex to the Protocol on liability. ECO acknowledges the crucial role of liability provisions in any legal regime. It is something that needs to be addressed if the Parties are seriously committed to environmental protection.

* Siting of Stations -
If Treaty nations are serious about protecting the Antarctic region as a natural reserve for peace and science, they need to halt the practice of building so many stations on confined sites. Sharing bases will permit more resources to go to scientific activity in those areas. A positive precedent has been set by the recently signed Argentine-Chilean Protocol, which establishes such procedures. For example, last season the Netherlands’ scientific research team worked from the Polish station, Arctowski, as opposed to establishing their own station. SCAR could be an advisory body on the siting of stations by providing suggestions based on science priorities. ECO encourages Parties to undertake periodic and scheduled consultations before deciding on sites for stations.

* Environmental Monitoring -
There are two different forms of environmental monitoring, both of which are necessary in Antarctica: monitoring of station activities on local and regional ecosystems; and studies to monitor global environmental changes concerning, for example, global warming, ozone depletion, and externally generated pollutants. Monitoring of station activities should become an integral part of the EIA process, and part of a regular review of station practices, while global monitoring must become an integral part of Treaty Parties’ scientific research.

* Hydrographic Cooperation -
Safety and environmental considerations make this a key issue and ECO recommends that there be more exchange of
On October 4, 1991: Hours before Antarctica was formally granted a 50-year reprieve from mining, Greenpeace announced that it would be taking on a new role in its campaign to have the frozen continent declared a permanently protected World Park.

Greenpeace’s World Park Base, which was established on Ross Island in 1987 as the only year-round environmental watchdog in Antarctica, is to be removed and replaced by mobile environmental monitoring teams.

Over the past five years, Greenpeace’s four-person overwintering teams have conducted field research for cooperative programs with many universities, inspected nearby McMurdo and Scott bases, monitored World Park Base’s potential impacts, and provided a continuous political presence on the ice. The yearly presence in the Ross Sea area has also been utilised by the organisation to investigate governmental activities on the continent, to inspect Southern Ocean fishing practices, and to demonstrate against Japanese whaling.

Greenpeace has made every effort to make World Park Base as environmentally sound as possible. An environmental impact assessment was carried out prior to placing the base on the continent. Continuing efforts to reduce the impacts even further, and ongoing monitoring, have been an integral part of the base operation. With the removal of the base, Greenpeace intends to go beyond the requirements new Protocol by completely removing World Park Base, and carrying out an in-depth monitoring program. A draft IEE, a crucial part of the decision-making process for base removal, will be distributed at this ATCM.

Greenpeace maintains that whenever bases are established in the Antarctic, they be constructed in such a manner that their eventual removal will be facilitated. Greenpeace urges that, with the exception of existing designated Historic Monuments, all abandoned bases in the Antarctic be removed.