

Resolution 2 (2023)

Helsinki Declaration on Climate Change and the Antarctic

We, the Consultative Parties of the Antarctic Treaty and the Members of the Committee on Environmental Protection (CEP) having met at the 45th Antarctic Treaty Consultative Meeting (ATCM) and the 25th Meeting of the Committee for Environmental Protection in Helsinki, Finland from 29 May to 8 June 2023;

Reaffirming our firm commitment to combat the adverse impacts of climate change in Antarctica;

Recognising the critical role of Antarctica and the Southern Ocean in the global climate system, and the implications of Antarctic cryospheric and oceanographic changes for global climate and sea-level rise;

Further recognising that observations, modelling and global assessments describe significant changes in Antarctic physical and living systems, both marine and terrestrial, and that changes in Antarctic and Southern Ocean environments are linked to, and influence, climate impact drivers globally;

Deeply concerned that further irreversible change is likely to occur without accelerated efforts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions in line with a trajectory consistent with holding the global temperature increase to well below 2 degrees Celsius above preindustrial levels and pursuing efforts to limit warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius;

Acknowledging that by further delaying concerted global action on climate change mitigation and adaptation, we risk missing the window of opportunity to secure a livable and sustainable future for all;

Underscoring the need to improve the scientific understanding of climate change in Antarctica and the implications globally, as well as for the Antarctic environment, and the need for adaptive management and conservation;

Highlighting the continuing work of the ATCM and CEP on climate change response, including, for example, through the Climate Change Response Work Program CCRWP Resolution 4 (2015), and Resolution 8 (2021);

Acknowledging the important contribution of the Subsidiary Group on Climate Change Response to the implementation and follow-up of the CCRWP adopted by the CEP;

Highlighting that in 2022, the ATCM welcomed the report of the Scientific Committee on Antarctic Research (SCAR) on Antarctic Climate Change and the Environment: A Decadal Synopsis and Recommendations for Action (ACCE), and adopted Resolution 4 (2022) and Decision 4 (2022) on the subject, including welcoming SCAR's advice that urgent action is required to prevent irreversible changes to the Antarctic environment and consequential implications for the planet;

Recognising the objectives and principles of the UNFCCC and the on-going work to tackle climate change by strengthening the full and effective implementation of the Paris Agreement, adopted under the UNFCCC;

Recalling the ATCM Paris Declaration in 2021 and reaffirming their commitment to better understand changes to the Antarctic climate and to implement actions with a view to limiting the adverse impacts of climate change on the Antarctic environment and dependent and associated ecosystems, protecting ecosystems and improving Antarctica's resilience to climate change;

Acknowledging that scientific evidence clearly shows that with the current trajectory of CO₂ emissions, the atmosphere and oceans will continue to warm and the oceans to acidify, atmospheric and ocean circulation patterns will continue to alter and the cryosphere will continue to lose ice in all forms, and sea levels will continue to rise;

Deeply concerned that multiple meters of sea level rise resulting from ice-sheet loss that is irreversible for centuries to millennia would have devastating to catastrophic impacts, particularly on millions of people living in low elevation coastal zones;

Taking into consideration the best available expertise and scientific findings on climate change and including the IPCC's AR6 Synthesis Report: Climate Change 2023, published on 20 March 2023;

Aware of the tools that the Parties to the Antarctic Treaty have at their disposal for action, such as research, monitoring, management, environmental protection, advocacy and communication, in accordance with best available science;

Hereby:

- 1.** Commit to substantially increasing our efforts to communicate the global implications of climate change in Antarctica within our own countries and in international forums, and the need to prevent the irreversible changes to Antarctica and consequential implications for the planet;
- 2.** Reaffirm the importance of the ongoing work of the Committee on Environmental Protection to support efforts within the Antarctic Treaty system to mitigate, prepare for, and build resilience to, the environmental impacts of a changing climate, and commit as a matter of priority to continue the implementation and regular review of the Climate Change Response Work Programme;
- 3.** Give strong support to the 5th International Polar Year (IPY) 2032-33 by championing its objectives, and seek to provide sufficient means to support the scientific endeavors of those planning IPY projects and logistics, and encourage the SCAR and COMNAP, together with its IPY partners, to use the occasion to take a further step forward to understand the impacts of climate and environmental change on the Antarctic environment and dependent and associated ecosystems, as well as the global implications of these changes;
- 4.** Encourage all Antarctic operators, including national Antarctic programs, tourist and non-governmental operators to continue to reduce their carbon footprints and investigate pathways and move towards carbon neutral ('net zero') operations, as well as to reduce their impacts on the Antarctic environment and its associated and dependent ecosystems and to continue deliberations on possible policy recommendations to this end;
- 5.** Intensify working together, including with SCAR and COMNAP, to plan and implement large scale internationally coordinated field-based research and information exchange efforts to make leaps in knowledge with respect to understanding the impact of global climate change on Antarctica, as well as the global role of Antarctica and the Southern Ocean in regulating global climate and future sea-level rise, under a range of future global temperature rise scenarios;
- 6.** Invite SCAR to continue to provide annual updates to its ACCE report and reconfirm our commitment to take account of the best scientific and technical advice available in taking appropriate measures to deliver our commitments made in the Protocol on Environmental Protection for the comprehensive protection of the Antarctic environment and dependent and associated ecosystems;
- 7.** Reaffirm efforts to increase knowledge on Antarctic environment and dependent and associated ecosystems, including better assessment of the risk of invasions by non-native species, to effectively inform the decision-making process;
- 8.** Aim to assess the risks of climate change to Antarctic Infrastructures and Historic Sites and Monuments and include mitigation, adaptation and management measures in Conservation Management Plans for Antarctic Historic Sites and Monuments, as appropriate;
- 9.** Work towards developing a systematically coordinated Antarctic climate and environment observation and monitoring network with an optimal spatial distribution, comparability and/or complementarity between observations where input can be used in key global observation and modelling systems and processes;
- 10.** Commit to strengthen and implement all management tools under the Environment Protocol, including inter alia area protection and management, in light of the effects and projected changes to Antarctic environments resulting from climate change, to provide enhanced protection of the Antarctic environment and dependent and associated ecosystems; and
- 11.** Reaffirm our commitment to Article 7 of the Protocol on Environmental Protection to the Antarctic Treaty, and stress that Antarctic mineral resource activities other than scientific research, including the extraction of fossil fuels, remains prohibited, in accordance with the Protocol on Environmental Protection to the Antarctic Treaty, which does not have an expiry date.