



## **46<sup>th</sup> ANTARCTIC TREATY CONSULTATIVE MEETING**

### **May 20 to 30, 2024 | KOCHI-INDIA**

#### **HOST COUNTRY COMMUNIQUÉ**

May 30, 2024

India hosted the 46th Antarctic Treaty Consultative Meeting (ATCM-46) and the 26th Committee for Environmental Protection (CEP-26) from May 20 to 30, 2024, in Kochi, Kerala. Organized by the Ministry of Earth Sciences through the National Centre for Polar and Ocean Research (NCPOR), the meetings included in-person and virtual attendance. A total of 404 delegates were registered for the 46<sup>th</sup> ATCM of which 328 attended in person and 76 attended virtually.

Ambassador Pankaj Saran chaired the ATCM, while Dr. Anoop Tiwari and Dr. Heike Herata chaired the CEP meeting. ATCM Working Group 2 was co-chaired by Dr Phil Tracey and Ms Sonia Ramos Garcia, and Working Group 1 was chaired by Mr Ted Kill. Dr Vijay Kumar acted as the Head of the Host Country Secretariat (HCS) and Dr Rahul Mohan as the Deputy Head of the HCS.

The event was officially opened by Mr. Kiren Rijiju, Union Cabinet Minister of Earth Sciences and was joined by Mr. Pavan Kapoor, Secretary (West) of the Ministry of External Affairs, and Dr. Shailesh Nayak, former Secretary of the Ministry of Earth Sciences. They emphasized India's commitment to Antarctic treaty, scientific research, climate change studies, and international cooperation. Mr Kiren Rijiju expressed India's honour to host the 46<sup>th</sup> ATCM and contribute to the global dialogue on peace, science, and environmental stewardship in Antarctica for preserving the most pristine wilderness on the planet. Mr Pavan Kapoor expressed the need to advance scientific knowledge to find solutions to climate change and global warming focused on polar ecosystems and India's readiness to collaborate in Antarctic affairs. Dr Shailesh Nayak discussed three major climate-change issues pertaining to Antarctica: polar ice melting and sea level rise, regional warming and ocean acidification.

The SCAR lecture as part of the Plenary, delivered by Dr. Sheeba Chenoli, highlighted the teleconnections between tropical regions and Antarctic region.

Key discussions at the ATCM included the operation of the Antarctic Treaty System, liability, biological prospecting, exchange of information, education issues, multi-year strategic work plan, safety, inspections, science issues, future science challenges,

scientific cooperation, climate change implications, and tourism management. Agreements were reached on several important matters.

The Parties emphasised the importance of education and outreach activities as an essential element of cooperation enshrined in the Antarctic Treaty and the Environmental Protocol.

A significant outcome was the adoption of a decision on development of an ambitious, comprehensive, flexible and dynamic framework for regulating tourism and non-governmental activities in Antarctica. Parties also discussed consultative status requests from Canada and Belarus, but no consensus was reached.

The CEP meeting, during May 20 to 24, addressed a range of issues and contributed to the implementation of the Environmental Protocol in Antarctica. The Committee agreed to prioritise further work on: the management implications of sea ice change; enhancing environmental impact assessment of major activities; protecting the emperor penguin; and developing an international framework for environmental monitoring in Antarctica. Following the advice of the CEP, the Parties adopted 17 revised and new management plans for ASPAs (Antarctic Specially Protected Areas) and several modifications /additions to the list of Historic and Monument Sites (HSMs). The ATCM also encouraged efforts to increase renewable energy use, and to ensure robust implementation of biosecurity measures to minimise the risks of Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI). The CEP elected a new Chair, Ms Ceisha Poirot from New Zealand.

The Host Country Secretariat through the National Centre for Polar and Ocean Research (NCPOR), Goa, conducted several side events to mark the ATCM-46 and CEP-26. It organised a seminar entitled 'Changing Antarctic and Challenges Ahead' jointly with the Korean Polar Research Institute and Polar Cooperation Research Centre, Kobe University on May 20, 2024 comprising of two panel discussions themed 'Challenges in Antarctic governance' and 'Shared responsibilities and commitments for Antarctic future'. A specially customised Mystamp with the ATCM-46 logo was released in collaboration with India Post. A mural themed 'Species-rich Antarctica' designed by school children, aimed at enhancing awareness of Antarctica amongst the young minds was unveiled in collaboration with Germany, ASOC and its partners. A panel discussion on 'Antarctic Synergy: Driving Scientific Progress through Diplomacy, fostering Cooperation through Research' was organised as an outreach effort for the college students from Kochi, Kerala.

The 46<sup>th</sup> Antarctic Treaty Consultative Meeting was held with an overarching theme of "Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam" a Sanskrit phrase which means one Earth, one family, one future. This resonates deeply with the Antarctic Treaty System – promoting peace, scientific cooperation, and preservation of Antarctica for mankind.

The Parties expressed their gratitude to India and their appreciation for the excellent hospitality and facilities provided for the Meeting.

The next ATCM (ATCM 47) will be hosted by Italy in 2025.